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THE POPE'S GREEN ISLAND



# THE POPE'S GREEN ISLAND

BY

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# THE POPE'S GREEN ISLAND

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY—AN EDITOR'S ADVENTURES

THIS book is written primarily for myself and for others who are seriously interested in the real Ireland. It does not seek to establish or support any "case" or theory: political, theological, or otherwise. It is a review and a reverie, but a review and a reverie concerning dramatic and enlightening experiences probably unique in latter-day Ireland. Developments, objective and subjective, were so unexpected or so peculiar, the association with diverse individualities was so liberal, the experience of stress, cross-currents, and changing conditions in the religious, theological, intellectual, social, and other domains was so considerable—nearly all of it reflective of an Ireland scarcely realised abroad, and in part a surprise to myself—that the whole drama fascinates the imagination, and challenges examination, if possible comprehension. Even the purely personal record might be made expressive, but that is a minor matter in comparison with the complex interests and forces, psychological, social, and otherwise, which from an exceptional and rather ironic vantage-place I was enabled, nay driven, to study—

and of course earlier trends and historic facts and factors that bore directly upon them came into the review. Trying and troublous though many of the experiences were, with stagnation and repression as accompaniments, I saw much of work and workers that were joyous and even heroic, while opposing principalities and powers showed human and almost epic qualities on occasion. I often had reason to recall the sage who bade us remember the good deeds of our enemies. From first to last I was in contact with an Ireland that appeared inexhaustibly interesting and spacious. In a breathing-spell I desire to obtain, if I can, a just and coherent picture of the men and minds concerned in the making and marring of this transitional Ireland.

From the beginning of December 1905 to the end of 1910, I was the editor, in succession, of three Irish weekly papers—yet practically one and the same paper—that had the curious fortune of proving obnoxious or distasteful to official Catholic authorities in Ireland, and of being a joy and an inspiration to younger Irish Catholic clerics—several of whom were contributors to their pages—as well as to a host of independent and progressive lay workers. I was banned by clerics and blessed by clerics. Certain Protestants were heartened by the ideas and the struggle, and cordially co-operated; other Protestants were puzzled or alarmed. Materialists, idealists, Modernists, theosophists, became interested. All this, though peculiar and piquant, would not be worth reviewing if the work we did or tried to do was not worth doing, and of Irish and human appeal. It was so, I believe, at every stage; and there was



scarcely anything of significance in Ireland that did not enter into our province.

All the time new factors and forces had come or were coming into being, and, apart from their own creative stress, challenged powerful old orders and conventions, though some on both sides pretended that there was no challenge. A national consciousness and a spirit of criticism that had been rising for a decade earlier began to give a more serious account of themselves. One saw an Ireland as rigid and insensitive as minerals apparently are, and one realised an Ireland the movement and growth of whose mind might be felt. Closer study revealed a curious variety in this living Ireland. Builders had sometimes builded better than they knew, pioneers had led to stages of which they had no notion whatever at the beginning. The mission of the Gaelic League, for the furtherance and popularisation of the Irish language and what were called "Irish-Ireland" ideas, had developed faculties and feelings far removed from the formal conception and programme, and led amongst other things to an educational zest delightful to thousands in humble places, disturbing or irritating to many in high places. It had attracted Churchmen and antagonised Churchmen. Within itself and without itself Catholicism in Ireland had to reckon with facts and factors which to an extent entirely novel in a long submissive and unquestioning nation put it on its trial philosophically, nationally, and above all socially. Even priests had come to admit that a serious case could be made out against official Maynooth, and that in the Ireland outside its walls Catholicism had grown formal and unworthy of its

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traditions as a spiritual and social force. Amongst numerous laics and clerics there was a very critical attitude towards Vaticanism, or the political and diplomatic side of Rome, though the Ultramontane attitude grew stronger in other quarters. On the place and rights of priests in the Irish social economy there were conflicting notions amongst the priests themselves, and a still greater conflict of view as to the place and rights of laics in the Church and elsewhere. Leaders of the laity who claimed that they had rights in the Church had their claims admitted frankly by candid priests, while they shocked or alarmed not a few of their lay brethren. The Catholic bishops as a whole were not particularly popular with laymen or clerics, and at one stage were severely criticised by both and defeated on a national and intellectual issue. The Modernist ideas, though privately rather than publicly, led to no little unrest. So the drama in the Catholic world had variety *go leòr*. Something of Protestantism was also in a sense at the cross-roads. Others raised their voices on behalf of what they described as Celtic Christianity. In the places where what, in the broad sense, may be called theosophic ideas, either obtained or began to find their way, we found a vision and philosophy of life rather fascinating to some Irish temperaments. Sometimes the effect of these esoteric ideas was to give inquirers and students a more spiritual and idealistic conception of their particular Christian creeds, sometimes they led to a virtual parting of the ways. Through all, the unhappy beings who most needed an enlivening and exalting gospel of life—the manual workers of various orders



—were not reached or taken serious count of by Catholic, Protestant, Modernist, or mystical teachers; at last they began to find pioneers of their own. Politics all the while was a singular medley, though here was transition too. Literature, in Irish especially, was racily alive and companionable, though the Gael, as a rule, was too social or critical or dominated by what he regarded as traditional, and as such sacred, to be much of an originator so far.

It must not be assumed, however, from this rapid and general sketch of our changing conditions and acute issues that this varied Ireland which I saw at close quarters was quite problem-vexed and fretful. The humanity was always more attractive than the problems, and whether we reached heights or deeps of experience we knew that the Master of Life had far greater lines and lessons to set for us still. To me it was appealing and animating to be amongst intensely earnest people, some trying bravely to live and express life, some trying grimly to suppress it, and to have part and pen in the fray at this critical phase of Ireland's re-moulding and re-making. It all seems to possess the colour and character and momentum of a saga—with a dolorous social world in the background always—and it were a blunder to spoil its telling by any tinge of conscious partiality. The factors and forces of those five years are of course in being to-day, and promise to be in being for many a day to come. To seize them fully and fairly—with necessary incidental glances either backward or outward—is to know Ireland from within, a region of strange light and shade.

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A few more or less personal points will enable the reader to see the angle, so to say, at which I observed Irish interests and changes. I had the happy fortune to grow up in a south-of-Ireland environment that still preserved a good deal of the lore and character of Gaelic times. In London for some years I saw much of the two different worlds of the daily press and the Irish organisations, the last being the London Gaelic League, which was full of individuality and zest. From the beginning of the century I had been following the new movement in Ireland itself very closely, writing regularly in new Irish weeklies, and on home tours and visits had made the personal acquaintance of many of the leaders and workers, lay and clerical. Towards the end of 1905 came the offer of the editorship of the *Irish Peasant*, printed and published at Navan, on the border of the beautiful Boyne Valley, some twenty miles from Dublin. It had been started by Mr. James M'Cann, M.P. for the College Green division of Dublin, in connection with his industrial and other schemes in Meath. After his death both the paper and the work were continued by Mrs. M'Cann and her sons. The *Irish Peasant* was edited in 1905 by Mr. P. D. Kenny ("Pat"). While much of it was "local" and to me exceedingly oppressive, Mr. Kenny's own work seemed very much alive; sometimes caustic when he addressed clergymen or graziers and spiced with an agreeably whimsical egoism. He and others gave me to understand that he was regarded as an "anti-cleric," but he thought that the Pope was upon his side.

I had given a good deal of attention to clerical questions in Ireland, especially since the stage, a few years before, when troubles arose over Gaelic League matters in the west and south. Most of the Irish priests with whom I had come into contact were young and liberal-minded. We had discussed philosophical and intellectual matters, and new problems of Church and nation, with interest and ardour; I had written on some of them in Irish and English. I looked forward after London literary and journalistic stress to a peaceful, pastoral life in the Boyne Valley, which, by the way, is wonder-ground in Irish lore and legend. It was understood that I could make the *Irish Peasant* as representative of the new and hopeful movements as I pleased, so I changed its scope and nature, bringing out a general or all-Ireland edition as well as a local one, and introducing sundry new features. From Dublin, Maynooth, Belfast, Cork, and other Irish cities and towns, as well as from London, Liverpool, Glasgow, and further Irish centres in Britain, contributors and correspondents quickly and steadily came. The year 1906 was a laborious one, but it was endlessly interesting and zestful. While critical where necessary, and always independent, the *Irish Peasant* of that vivid year showed decided glow and optimism. It treated of everything hopeful in the nation, and as one way of showing how really rich and alive that nation was in many of its elements, gave impressions and character-studies of all sorts of Irish thinkers and workers, intellectual and artistic and industrial, Catholic, Protestant, and Presbyterian. A belief in man's innate worth and divinity was im-



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plicit in its philosophy ; it suggested that four and a half millions of people who could not make Ireland more human and attractive than she was as a whole ought to be ashamed of themselves. It expressed on occasion the theories of progressive and eager clerical friends regarding cleric and laic, Church and nation ; theories which are made clear in subsequent pages. There was no suggestion of clash with the "Church," there were necessary differences with Churchmen, in some of which clerical contributors and friends were unanimously with me, in regard to others they were divided or undecided. Everything was freely and fully discussed by both lay and clerical writers ; there was a bracing stress of thought and proclamation of ideal reflective of the younger Ireland of the day. The first great cause of difference with the Catholic bishops and conservative ecclesiastics generally arose over the British Education Bill of 1906, some of us maintaining that the Irish Party had no business to interfere in the British educational realm, that in this as in other things it gave its own avowed case away, at the instigation or dictation of the Hierarchy. The matter, bound up with various other matters, need not now be discussed. A further burning question was that of the management and control of Irish primary education. It was raised incidentally in our editorial columns at an early stage, and afterwards treated more exhaustively, while lay and clerical contributors debated it with spirit. The conservative clerical stand was strongly against any lay control in any circumstances ; young priests admitted lay rights in certain circumstances. The advocacy of free libraries and various

other things brought further trouble. Altogether, the *Irish Peasant* of 1906, though it was constructive and conciliatory as well as critical, illustrated, and no doubt accentuated, the difference between the old order and a more hopeful new order of Irish ecclesiastics. There was also the feeling on the part of the older priests that, as a friendly young priest informed me, it was "telling the people too much." For some months the pressure brought to bear on the M'Cann family was strong and at times subtle. At length, in December 1906, Cardinal Logue intervened. Mr. John M'Cann received a remarkable missive from his Eminence.

The Cardinal said he found that the *Irish Peasant* "was becoming a most pernicious anti-Catholic print." Its columns were open to all kinds of characters to ventilate their anti-clerical views. As it was published on the borders of his archdiocese, to guard the people for whom he was responsible "from its poisonous influence," he would be obliged to denounce it publicly and prohibit the reading of it in the archdiocese.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. M'Cann's mother, who was the actual owner of the paper, was greatly distressed by this communication. She did not inquire curiously into the difference between Catholicity and clericalism, or between religion and ecclesiastical politics or preferences. The family had also particular ecclesiastical ties and connections, as well as special business concerns—including a stockbroking firm with clerical clients—

<sup>1</sup> I published the text of the letter later on, when the whole question was the subject of comment at home and abroad. Personally, though the judgment astonished me, I have never doubted that the Cardinal acted according to his own sense of duty.

and were altogether in a peculiar position. Already they had been troubled considerably by clerical pressure, direct and indirect. This last bolt was too much for Mrs. M'Cann, and she decided to discontinue the publication of the paper forthwith. I decided that if at all possible I would continue it independently, and from Dublin. At the moment there was also a suggestion—it was not originally my own and was rather casually adopted—of appealing to Rome on the question of Catholicity raised by the cardinal. However, in the correspondence I had with him, he first expressed a strong doubt that he had described the paper as “anti-Catholic,” and finally it appeared that he meant it was anti-clerical, or that it raised questions which ecclesiastics considered disturbing. The mention of Rome in an emergency number of the *Peasant*, published in Dublin at Christmas-time, in which I explained the situation and the “suppression,” brought me curious expressions of incredulity, astonishment, and protest, all from Catholics. I was told—what I did not know—that there was no use in troubling Rome, as the Vatican was in a state of alarm and excitement over France, what came to be called Modernism, &c., and furthermore—which I knew perfectly well—that Rome in any case had no right or title to interfere or lay down the law in Irish affairs. “Don’t appeal to Rome; it’s worse than Parliamentaryism,” wrote an Irish editor. I duly explained that Rome had been mentioned only in regard to the question of Catholicity or anti-Catholicity. Some of our ecclesiastics were very ready to try to frighten simple people by raising



the cry of "anti-Catholic" on slight or no provocation, and it was time to show them that we had no intention of enduring it, also that on questions of Catholicity pure and simple Cardinal Logue was not the final authority. As to any Irish domestic or national or other question—school management or otherwise—discussed in the *Irish Peasant*, Rome of course, I said, had nothing to do. A pronouncement from the Pope himself on anything Irish could only be treated on its merits; it would settle nothing; we would take or reject it just as we deemed proper. An order of a Pope to a particular country, as Newman had shown in his famous "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk" on Papal Infallibility, was in no way binding and could be resisted or ignored. Anyhow, once the Cardinal left the "anti-Catholic" note I considered that my own point had been gained, and I troubled no more about the matter one way or the other.

As to the continuance of the paper, while I had no hesitation myself as to the duty, and while many of the younger priests, like the progressive laity, agreed heartily with me, the position was difficult and complicated. First of all the great majority of us had little or no money; almost every ardent friend, to use the country phrase, was "as poor as a church mouse." Again, while there was a strong feeling generally that the Cardinal had been unjust or had blundered, it was felt in many quarters that, right or wrong, the "Church" generally would support him, that the *Irish Peasant's* successor would be banned far and wide; that while readers could be gathered, advertisers would be frightened;

that generally speaking an already difficult situation—the Portarlinton battle, described later, was in progress—would be further complicated. Curiously enough, amongst those who doubted and hesitated the most were Protestants. Some of them in the Gaelic League were exceedingly nervous at the thought of what would surely be described as “a paper to fight the priests.” I had been elected a member of the Gaelic League executive some months earlier, and my membership would bring the connection home. The spirit of the rank and file, however, was much more militant than the official spirit. Meanwhile the arrangements for the new series of the *Peasant* proceeded in Dublin, and the first number was issued in February 1907. Pessimists said the paper would live for three months, optimists said six. I, although I knew our deplorable financial weakness much better than optimists or pessimists, thought that with a struggle, and by being satisfied with apostolic poverty—there was a very small staff at first, and never an adequate one—we might hold the field for twelve. We did; in fact, at the end of two years, when we changed the name of the paper to the *Irish Nation*, we felt cheerily alive under difficulties. There had been an acute financial crisis about once every three months. The starting of a printing business, partly designed to keep together as many members of the old concern as possible, and the founding of a municipal paper at a later stage, were not exactly beneficial moves; but one had to learn by experience, and in those years what I learned about Ireland and myself was encyclopædic. The struggle was arduous, exciting, and joyous.

Despite all that unfriendly clerics could do against the paper in towns and country places its circulation was good; the advertisement fortunes were necessarily much weaker. (We declined to take whisky advertisements, &c.; some thought quixotically.) It was wider in scope than our weekly of the Boyne Valley days, but more critical on occasion; necessarily so, as bishops and others had become more militant, especially on questions of education. I had clerical contributors and supporters from Doctors of Divinity to curates. Reams of enlightening correspondence arrived every week. Literary, dramatic, political, industrial, and social matters all came within our province. Through the Gaelic League and other bodies, from industrial to mystical, life was wonderfully widened, and the everyday experience of two languages was decidedly stimulating. The home and foreign visitors to the modest editorial room in that unpretending Dublin street were original and entertaining studies in themselves. Maynoothmen, Americans, Frenchmen, farmers, modernists, Celtic poets, cattle drivers, schoolmasters, politicians, and scores of others came. At a couple of stages when life was exceptionally toilsome and exciting, I found what the reader may consider a peculiar species of recreation and distraction in the writing of novels, the first in English, the second in Irish. Both dealt with contemporary Irish life and thought, both contained characters based on actual people. The first, *The Plough and the Cross*, was an effort, amongst other things, to interpret the subjective side of what objectively was more or less familiar to thousands; I found the task and experi-



ence singularly exhilarating. One story added to the difficulties, both to the surprises of life. *The Plough and the Cross*, both on its serial publication in the *Irish Nation* and its issue in book form, irritated conservative clerics to an astonishing degree. It was treated as diabolical propagandism, and a malignant attack on episcopacy and clergy; in the words of a priest, who wrote a long series of articles against it in a Dublin weekly, the writer "lashed out with all his might against priests and bishops in Ireland." Strangely enough well-known priests with high Irish ideals figured largely in the story, and their characters and conceptions were of course unfolded with the utmost sympathy. Still, it simply sowed wrath in extreme clerical quarters. And as it seemed as lightsome to others as it seemed darksome to them it might be considered a peculiar production. The fact is it was a piece of Ireland seen from within and presented in a detached spirit. The later Irish story concerned less exciting but at times more esoteric themes, and the surprise was the measure of interest displayed by young and old readers in just this unfamiliar ground.

As time went on the *Irish Nation* concerned itself with more and more phases of Irish life and fortune, and for that matter misfortune. Hard as the battle was with the more rigid and formalistic clerics, the greater trouble arose out of social rather than clerical issues. Theories and truths, regarding the rights of laymen and nation, for which the *Irish Peasant* had fought, came to be widely accepted, but a great deal of our later social criticism and suggestion caused alarm and an-

tagonism. On labour questions, housing questions, problems of rural lives quite untouched by land purchase or co-operation, and in numerous other encounters with vested interests or social selfishness our programme proved distinctly disturbing. What the *Irish Nation* called applied Christianity was described by the anti-social as "Socialism," and that was assumed to be diabolical. Others, especially those who accepted one or other official political party policy, would have the consideration of social ills and sores put away pending the triumph of the policy in the unveiled and idealised future. Meanwhile more and more of the nation might decay or emigrate. Towards the end of 1910, after four years of a struggle of a record kind in Ireland, and five years of Irish editing altogether, I found it impossible to get any further for the time. We had even less funds than usual, which is saying a good deal; the younger people who were on our side were little better circumstanced; we had helped much to win a few big battles, like that against the bishops over Irish in the university; we could make no more headway with social questions, or others like the control of education, till the national legislative question were done with. Whatever one may think of "Home Rule," whether it is good or bad, a "national settlement" or "more Imperialism," or anything else, the working or waiting for it means that several urgent things are "held up," or saved from being tackled, in Ireland. For the rest, I saw that the *Irish Nation* would need to be re-organised on a better financial basis and an adequate staff provided if it were to be made effective for the

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varied work that still needed to be done. Meanwhile, especially after my somewhat exciting experiences as a story-teller, I wanted to write a book or two. So the eventful pioneer press-work was suspended at the end of 1910, to the relief of some and the deep regret of more. We had had five years of storm and charm.



## CHAPTER II

### THE ISLE OF EXTREMES

STUDENTS of the Hindu *Bhagavad Gita*—which has been an inspiration to a number of people in Dublin—are familiar with what is called “raising the self by the Self,” that is to say, purifying and exalting the ordinary selfish nature, the everyday personal self, through realisation and application of more and more of the higher Self, the hidden Divinity, the inner Christos, the Son of the Father, the Light that enlighteneth every man, as it has been named in turn. It is one of the Hindu doctrines that, seriously considered, are kindred to facts and phases of esotéric and mystical Christianity. It means indeed a realisation and utilisation of the divine truth that the Kingdom of Heaven is within you. “There is no purifier in this world to be compared to spiritual knowledge,” says Krishna in the same book, wherein, as in other works, the idea and its practical bearing are unfolded in many ways. At one stage it is pointed out that he who has attained to meditation—in this oriental scriptural sense—should constantly strive to stay at rest in the Supreme, remaining in solitude and seclusion, having his body and his thoughts under control. “For the self’s purification he should practise meditation with his mind fixed on one point, the modifications of the thinking principle controlled and the actions of the senses and organs

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restrained." This is a higher form of the concentration, or one-pointedness, of which students of such lore and ethics learn so much. The most interesting Irishman, I think, of the period once gave us in Dublin a graphic and humorous description of his own early efforts in concentration. He is one of our greatest and most practical pioneers. Practical people often mean people who are practically dead, but *he* is intensely alive and ardent, the best example I know of the visionary as worker. But his initial experiences with one-pointedness were terrific. Whether he concentrated his thoughts on "an illuminated, selfless Brahmin, a cow, an elephant, a dog, an outcast," a lyric, a lotus, or the Liffey at O'Connell Bridge, it was all the same. He was conscious at once of a sense of interior exaltation and a desire to arise and slay those who were nearest and dearest to him. The good he slowly developed was accompanied by an intolerable share of impassioned evil. The progression to the condition of the "harmonised man" was both thrilling and painful.

The latter-day Ireland in which we are interested has illustrated some such duality on a large scale. There has been a great deal of self-recovery, of vision, of ideation, of a passion to realise fine ideals; there has been an intensity of concentration—in the educational order and others. This has been mostly beautiful, but sometimes a little violent, unreasonable, and extravagant; and all the time it has led to stiffening, antagonism, a thirst for repression, yet now and then capitulation and conversion in other parts of the body politic. Agricultural co-operators have disturbed certain politicians and sundry shopkeepers, Gaelic

Leaguers have angered very different principalities and powers, broad-minded and Irish-minded priests have clashed with rigid and un-Irish politico-clerical tradition, Modernists and theosophists in the broad sense have begun the breaking of crusted ecclesiastical jurisprudence and have released spirit, a more human and Christian social ideal has shocked worldliness in high places, clerical and lay; and so on. Hence, as in our friend's individual case, the progression has meant pain and strife as well as thrill. If we dwelt merely on the actual clash and combat and the sometime impassioned language our record would be rather vexatious. We must always try to see and remember the underlying ideal, the explaining vision, the essential points of view. We must also remember that even the conservative and the repressive have other and worthy sides. Bishops who declaim against thought and appear to dread progress, parish priests who resist lay rights, do helpful and sacred work in their own proper spheres week in week out.

The situation is made more dramatic and more difficult by several causes but little understood abroad. Thus it is usually assumed that what is called the "religious difficulty" in Ireland arises from the clash of Catholicism and Protestantism. We do not see any such clash throughout the greater part of the country, and where we do see it it is seldom the fault of the democracy on either side, at least primarily. Far greater difficulties lie within the very mixed Irish Catholic world itself. One or other of them meets the Irish pioneer, intellectual, industrial, or otherwise, at every point.



In the first place, Catholicism in many rural districts and towns has long been marred by overgrowths that have nothing to do with essential Catholicity. This is shown in some astonishing beliefs, especially about the priesthood. In regard to these latter the explanation is many-sided. In the penal days, the tragic times of Irish Catholicism, priests and people suffered together, and the priesthood, speaking generally, was in due course idealised. Throughout the nineteenth century the priests lived comfortably on that tradition, and did little themselves in the new conditions to deserve the continued idolising. As the Gaelic order of things, after wars and famines, penal laws and emigration, and the establishment of a deliberately un-Irish or anti-Irish educational system, began to lose its last holds, great confusion arose. The official Church on the whole had become an anglicising agency in Maynooth and outside it. Whatever its reasons, it was on the side of English policy and projects against what remained of the Irish national idea and the Irish conception of civilisation. To folk who mostly spoke Irish, to folk who thought in Irish and spoke a mixture of good Irish and broken English, to folk who mostly spoke broken English, the sermons preached and the religious instruction tendered came to be more and more in English, and a verbose, extravagant English they could not possibly understand. In the primary schools, of which the priests were made managers, not of course by Irish popular choice, but by English enactment, the amazing policy of teaching, or trying to teach, Irish-speaking and partly Irish-speaking children through English alone was relentlessly

pursued. There are churches and schools of which the same may be said to-day; there has been a good deal of agitation about them in the last ten or fifteen years. That all this should lead to mental confusion regarding religion and the priesthood can well be imagined. All the time the active and untrained folk fancy was itself at work and wrought its own theological and ecclesiastical marvels. Eventually in rural places the priest in the folk conception had become a wonder-worker, a sacred magician. He could work miracles at will, he could turn obstreperous sinners into animals, to quarrel with him was unlucky in the gravest degree. Such beliefs were common in my youthful days in the country; those who had come to doubt them were regarded as daring sceptics. They are held still in various places, but the scepticism is now more general. I have never known of a case in which a priest spoke out publicly against them. Indeed, the notion of mysterious priestly power is tacitly encouraged by a number of the Catholic clergy. Apparently they would fain have the people regard them as potent local successors to that magical St. Patrick—the hero of the great Irish clerical epic—with whom I deal in other pages. Some Irish Catholic laymen whose reason rebels against this whole folk-lore conception of the priesthood have yet a curious feeling, when they come into opposition to priests over social, educational, or intellectual issues, that they contend in a sense with the occult and the unknown. There is a touch of weirdness in the air.

Again, a great deal of the theology, history, &c., propounded by many Irish priests is crude, old-

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fashioned, or materialistic. It has stern, sombre, barbaric phases. It has much more relation to the Old Testament than to the New. Indeed, not a little of what was hardest and grimmest in Judaism has been turned to their purpose and is preached with a vengeance. Their material Hell is horrible melodrama; they have done much to make of us a Devil-obsessed people. They take Genesis with bald literalness, their world is just 6000 years old, to them everything before the Christian era, except more or less of Judaism, was heathenism wild or foul. Of any philosophy of involution and evolution they reckon nothing or accept nothing. Catholic philosophy generally seems a sealed or an unused book to them; their sermons and their avowedly religious books or booklets are innocent thereof. Progressive priests voice their feelings on the want with great candour. The general sermons and magazine articles are pietistic, emotional, rhetorical, verbose, controversial, or boastful in turn, but few that I have ever heard or read—a very large number indeed—breathe the finer spirit of Catholicity. Numerous Irish priests, who in themselves are earnest and zealous personalities, do not seem to try or care to put their better selves into their addresses. They often appear to have a rather indifferent opinion of the mentality of their congregations. Furthermore, a considerable proportion of them apparently cannot use language, in public at all events, with any sense of mastery, responsibility, or style. It would often be exceedingly unkind to judge an Irish priest by his language. It misrepresents, even parodies, rather than typifies, him-



self. He is more human and more natural than his speech or his writing.

Another great trouble is that so much of the priesthood has now no particular apostolic or evangelical sense; it is largely professional, highly formalistic, afraid of new ideas, hazy in its notions of the outer world, even of the progressive Catholic elements thereof; alarmed, above all things, over any and every development of "Socialism": it has lost the old collectivist Catholic ideal. Above the priesthood reigns the episcopacy, which, as a whole, is still more formalistic, more fearful of human nature, more remote from social and intellectual realities, more inimical to nearly all things distinctively Irish; an alien institution for the most part, but one that in this century is steadily losing its prestige. A few members, mostly later appointments, recognise and sympathise with vital Irish ideas, and so possess some living influence. But, generally speaking, the episcopacy is regarded by progressive priests and active laymen as the obedient servant of the Vatican and its diplomatic and political policy, on the one hand, and a check, so far as circumstances allow, on the development of a distinctive and cultured Irish nation, on the other. Apparently it does not want thought or overmuch culture and native spirit at home, and it desires more and more of the Irish race to go abroad as missionaries of one kind or another. Its policy and predilections at all events are regarded with suspicion, and its personalities as a rule are not rated high by the young generation. An able young priest summed up the matter rather mordantly for me one day in Dublin: "Every man

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of individuality makes mistakes. No man who makes mistakes is made a bishop. Consequently . . .” Over the capable and advanced young priests the bishops are apt to exercise their power autocratically, and in present circumstances the young clerics themselves can only endure and hope. The knowledge of such autocratic action, however, has sharpened and intensified the freer lay criticism of recent years.

There is a further most interesting factor, new if superficially regarded, but really the recovery, re-manifestation, and development of a long-dormant or neglected force. This is represented by the Gaelic League, and already we can see that not only has it consciously affected the national outlook and inlook, but that unconsciously it has affected the religious or theological position in more ways than one. In the national order it has given effect to truths that many forgot in the eighteenth century, and that most Irish people, especially leaders, never dreamt of in the nineteenth century. As to the other order, it need only be noted at this point that old Gaelic ideas about man and woman and life show much that is markedly different from the general Roman view. Even in the mediæval Gael's philosophy, while there was a decided Roman element, a very human Gael remained withal. Gradually the Gael receded or shrank, or seemed to do so; from an early part of the eighteenth century conventional “Irish history” pays little attention to him; Swift, the Volunteers, Grattan's Parliament, &c., occupy the stage. He was there withal; he was strong in some respects and had his own distinctive inner life, if a lowly outer one, till the



Famine of 1846-7. Even in the succeeding five decades, though still less regarded and reckoned with, he kept a certain vitality, as we shall see. The Gaelic continuity was never broken. And to the terms "Gael" and "Gaelic" we are not necessarily to attach a particular racial significance. I mean by the Gael a unit or type of the age-old civilisation that expressed itself through Irish, ancient, middle, or modern. This civilisation, when it was strong, absorbed Normans and others. Dr. Geoffrey Keating himself, the early modern Irish classic, was of the type known as "Sean-Ghall," the old or early-settling foreigner. Now, for a decade and a half, with the Gaelic League and its developments, direct and indirect, we have the Gael again, very much alive in places. Thousands have been given a new vision and impulse. The Church itself—as the "Church" is popularly understood—is not easy in its mind about it all, and we shall see the why and the wherefore. It is a many-sided case. For one thing we have come to hear declarations of a self-realisation, a recovery of the romance of life, a sense of the hero in man—ancestral man and the man of to-day—that ring like heresy on the ears of our older ecclesiastics, and of some who are not old. "To me," said one of our most noted Irishmen some years ago, "it seems that here the task of teacher and writer is above all to present images of divine manhood to the people whose real gods have always been their heroes. Those Titan figures, Cuchulainn, Fionn, Oscar, Oisín, Caoilte, all a mixed gentleness and fire, have commanded for generations that spontaneous love which is the only

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true worship paid by man. It is because of this profound and long-enduring love for the heroes, which must be considered as forecasting the future, that I declare the true ideal and destiny of the Celt in this island to be the begetting of a humanity whose desires and visions shall rise above earth into god-like nature." This may seem too beautifully romantic, save in one's highest moments, but undoubtedly with the new traits and trend of Gaeldom there has come a sense of a more spacious and a more intimate Ireland than the last generation knew, and, what is better than realising the heroic life of the past, young hearts and minds are inspired to evoke heroic life in the present and in themselves, individually and collectively. What is best in young Ireland may often nowadays have a critical and challenging outlook, but it has an optimistic and joyous inlook. While bishops and other ecclesiastics deliver alarmed and woeful pronouncements that are really a criticism of human nature, this eager young Ireland believes more and more in a certain divinity inherent in human nature. And here of course is really a clash of two old religious, indeed two Christian, theories. Here is the immemorial contrast of the exoteric and the esoteric, the ephemeral and the mystical view. On the one hand, looking to the passing, personal man, the superficial life, we have the theory of the miserable sinner, the human worm, with no godliness in him ; on the other we have a sense of the higher self, the divine ego, in whom is the Kingdom of Heaven. Nothing is more notable in Ireland than this contrast between the implicit faith of lay workers and

some rising priests and the explicit pessimism of the generality of ecclesiastics. Non-believers, we are given to understand, are the trouble in other lands. We are banned in Ireland, or rather some would like to ban us, for believing too much.

While such extremes meet in our island there are other extremes which do not meet, and know nothing of one another. There is extraordinary diversity in the social and intellectual conditions, and there are strata which cannot really be said to have any "social" or "intellectual" life at all. In these the housing and living conditions are simply abominable : I refer, amongst other haunts, to city slum stretches and wretched cabins of the west and elsewhere which I have seen myself. But all is not wretchedness in apparently forlorn cabins by any means. The Irish speaker will be able to draw out a store of traditional song and story and legend again and again. I shall give at a later stage a remarkable instance of what has come to us from one of the humblest of Connemara homes. A curious point about many of their tenants is their shadowy and unreal conception of Dublin and everything east of the Shannon, while of American centres like Portland and Boston, to which so many of their kindred go, sometimes to return with their savings and settle at home, they speak as familiarly as if they were but a few parishes away. America is in a sense their metropolis and market town, while some of them have seriously asked if Dublin is a part of Ireland. In dealing with Ireland, even Catholic Ireland, we must not forget her variety, her unconnected strata, her unrelated psychologies. I have seen a heroic Ireland, a mediæval Ireland,



an intensely modern Ireland, and some Irelands I would find it hard to classify approximately. And often I have felt that creed, philosophy, race-mind, nation, and all such systematisation and generalisation are, when all is said, incidental. They but deal, so to say, with social, psychic, and other "soil" and environment. The arresting importance and mystery is the "seed" set in this soil—the individual soul in this transient but doubtless immensely significant part of its experience and destiny.

## CHAPTER III

### POPE, PRIESTS, AND PROTESTANTS.

So far as my experience goes, Englishmen of most kinds, and Irish Protestants of some kinds, are rather obsessed by the Pope, while Irish Catholics are not. In Catholic Ireland most of the time the Pope seems remote; a venerable personality to be sure to the simple-hearted masses, but a little vague; to the intellectual an occasional problem; to the spiritual or the philosophical a factor sometimes delicately explained and sometimes almost explained away, often not recked of at all. Save on rare occasions his Holiness gives no appreciable trouble to the minds of Irish Catholics. But plenty of them, priests as well as laity, sometimes speak with severity of his advisers and of himself in so far as they and he are parts and pillars of Vaticanism, or the diplomatic and political side of Rome. The general Irish Catholic makes a clear distinction between Rome as a spiritual centre and Rome as a worldly centre. The Vatican in its human and worldly capacity is not regarded in a friendly light in Ireland; quite the contrary. It is popularly understood to be hostile to Irish aspirations; and it is also believed that its aid is often sought against Ireland or Irishmen by English statesmen or diplomats, acting, of course, indirectly or semi-



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officially. In justification of these beliefs expressive modern facts and events are pointed to, amongst them the moral of the Persico mission and letters and the famous case of Sir George Errington "keeping the Vatican in good humour"—and letting Downing Street know the good news—while it was sought to keep an ecclesiastic with patriotic leanings out of the archbishopric of Dublin. The Irish popular view that Rome and England rule together, but subtly not avowedly, is illustrated with mingled intensity and comedy in the attitude to the Duke of Norfolk. To the general Irish mind his Grace is not simply a man or a duke, but a colossal incarnation of Anglo-Roman machination; when he is not in Rome or Downing Street he is on the road between them; and his devotion to Rome and Britain is only matched by his antipathy to Ireland. This romantic exaggeration of the folk-fancy is only a picturesque outgrowth of the general belief that the Vatican is no friend of Ireland's, and that England, or governing England, which is understood to dislike Rome and Rome rule in the abstract, endeavours to get Rome to do as much ruling of us as it can manage. Suggestively enough, when Vatican or Propaganda has actually interfered in Irish national affairs, or affairs on which the masses felt strongly, it has met a direct and decisive defeat. Thus Rome disliked the Parnell testimonial or tribute in the eighties, and "proclaimed" it, with the result that it "swelled visibly," rapidly rising to £40,000. I was only a schoolboy at the time, but clearly remember the resentment and decisive action of the people in a district almost wholly Catholic.

Rome was no more successful against the "Plan of Campaign," and in 1909, as we shall see, Cardinal Logue felt obliged to make a public declaration that Rome had not directed the Irish bishops to stand for a peculiar type of Catholic university as against the national institution which the people demanded. The story that the Vatican and English Catholics—including the inevitable Duke of Norfolk—wanted the new university to be moulded in their own way roused popular resentment and embarrassed the prelates. Of these prelates themselves the most unpopular were all understood to have owed their elevation to the episcopacy to English or anti-Irish influences at the Vatican, or to actual Roman dislike of candidates assumed to be more friendly to Irish ideas.

Irish candour on the subject of the machinery of Rome, and the sharp distinction drawn by Irish Catholics between essential Catholicity and Vaticanism, are no new story, though the rising generation has still clearer thoughts on the subject than the old. At the same time it is interested in numerous new activities, and Rome the greater part of the time is quite apart from its consciousness; it only declares itself on the matter of Roman unfriendliness to Ireland, or troubles particularly about it when in one way or another it is brought specially under notice. And then in all candid discussions it is taken for granted by Irish Catholic laymen and Irish-minded priests that no matter what changes or evolution may take place in the country the Pope and the Vatican will be pro-English always, never pro-Irish, and that if any clash or trouble should

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happen to come they would take the part of England against Ireland. Rome, for one thing, illusive as the dream may appear, expects that England will yet become Catholic—prayers for “the conversion of England” are said regularly in English Catholic churches. But taking facts as they are it is natural enough that the Vatican should desire to conciliate England in every possible way, thereby tending to make matters easier for the Church round the empire. As against a world-power like the British empire Ireland in herself counts for little or nothing at Rome; at least that is the general Irish Catholic view, shared by those Irish priests and laymen who ought to know something particular about Roman policy. Rome looks on Ireland as a small “safe” place, mainly important as a training-ground and jumping-off board for missionaries who will “spread the faith” abroad. Which brings us to another crucial point. All the interesting things that have happened in Ireland in this century have been inspired by the ideal of making Ireland more fruitful and attractive in and for herself, socially, industrially, artistically, intellectually. We might call it native intensive culture. This home concentration and creativeness does not please Rome, so far as Rome understands what is happening, and it certainly does not please the great majority of the Catholic bishops—though they cannot very well oppose it directly and ostensibly—who are the agents and pillars of Rome and its policy. An educated Ireland, alive with eager ideals, and primarily and mainly interested in Ireland, would not suit them at all. It would not be a submissive Ireland—it



would not say with the ironical Irish Catholic friend who re-wrote the Nicene Creed, "I believe in one submissive Catholic flock of sheep"—and as a prime article of its faith would be, as we can see already, that the real missionary work for Irishmen is in Ireland, it would leave other lands to provide their own apostles for the most part. The Irish home zest and intensive culture already in being explain a great deal that is superficially puzzling. The positive work, however, is more interesting in itself than in its bearing upon any controversy or side-issue.

In earlier years when Gaelic Leaguers began to come into clash here and there with ecclesiastics over issues that ecclesiastics alone had long decided—English sermons in Aran first brought trouble in an acute degree—progressive young priests as well as laymen were exceedingly anxious that the laity should be clear on the whole question of the relation of priests and people, and furthermore on the relation of Ireland and Rome. They saw that we were passing out of a semi-patriarchal and also somewhat serf-like age, that much of the new generation had schemes and purposes of its own and would not endure the leading-strings of the old. Hence, without a thorough understanding of their relative rights and positions, a dangerous if not disastrous division between clergy and laity would almost inevitably come to pass. That the laity had very decided rights in the Church, and that Churchmen had very definite duties, long neglected, to the nation, were basic facts emphasised from the first, and they were enunciated in connection with current happenings and discussions, during our whole Boyne Valley

year, in the *Irish Peasant*. Amongst the clergy who expressed their philosophy in the earlier years none was more ardent than the late Father Michael Moloney, a cultured young priest, who lived mostly in London, but saw all he could of Ireland, where he was highly esteemed and trusted. He organised the Irish religious celebrations in Westminster Cathedral—incidentally a lesson and an example to home bishops—but they were soon rendered impossible by the action of Archbishop (now Cardinal) Bourne. Like many others his ideal was a cultured and Irish-minded clergy on the one hand, a cultured and Irish-minded laity on the other. For Churchmen cultured in all senses, liberal-minded and apostolic, inspired with the spirit of the Church in her greatest days, zealous in the national order, tolerant and practical in the social sphere, he yearned with all his heart. He desired that to the masses in his native land the Church should stand for art and beauty once more, and that in hymn and sermon she should be linked in solemnity and tenderness and dignity with the ancestral language. He was an idealist in regard to the bishops, at any rate in high and glowing moments. He often said that if they were inspired with the Gaelic ideal they could bring priests and people within measurable distance of its realisation in half a generation. Others, including young priests, were pessimistic about the prelates, and some of us said then and later that if the bishops in every diocese, and the priests in every parish, were social, industrial, and intellectual enthusiasts, that would be no excuse for even one layman remaining inactive or indolent; we could not have a progressive



nation till all the elements in the nation were alive and alert, utilising their powers and opportunities to the utmost. Priests could be co-workers and welcome; it would be all to the good; and it did not seem natural any way to have an ecclesiastical order as a thing apart, suggesting that religion was something isolated from daily life; but the laity would necessarily be the main element in the working nation and its affairs, education included. It was, after all, the collectivist and co-operative ideal of Christianity applied to the nation—that all creeds believing in the nation and its natural development should co-operate on equal terms was of course an axiom. The young priests agreed generally with it all.

When Rome was mentioned in all such discussions it was invariably assumed that the Vatican did not understand native Irish ideals, and would never care for them; that the Vatican, for the reasons given above, would be pro-British in the future as in the past, and that, semi-officially, Downing Street, on any occasion of trouble or difference, would seek to get the Vatican, acting directly or through the bishops, to serve its will and purpose in Ireland. Hence it was necessary to understand, and to get Irish Catholics generally to understand, that Vaticanism, political or diplomatic Rome in any shape or form, is not Catholicism, and has no claim whatever to obedience. In a large way the people had always understood that, and resisted Rome on political matters which they took seriously. It was felt, however, that in the new day Rome might interfere in a more subtle way. Thus Rome might

issue a pronouncement against the Gaelic League—the possibility, even the imminence, of this was rumoured more than once a little later. It must be clearly understood that this was none of Rome's business. When these discussions first started, and for some time after we first dealt with such issues in the *Irish Peasant*, Ireland was under the Propaganda, which the priests rather resented; she was afterwards brought directly under the Pope. But, Propaganda or Pontiff, it made no difference. Neither should dictate in Irish domestic concerns, and had no right whatever to interfere. For the guidance of general readers we gave in the new *Peasant* a long summary of Bishop Doyle's expressive declarations in the "Essay on the Catholic Claims," addressed to Lord Liverpool, also salient points from Newman's famous "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk" on Papal Infallibility. Newman, replying to Gladstone, limited Papal infallibility to the utmost; only when the Pope spoke *ex cathedra*, on universal issues, to the Church as a whole, could he be considered infallible. Orders addressed to a particular country or a particular class need not be obeyed. Newman further maintained that a Pope had no power over the conscience of any Catholic. If the Pope ordered one thing and conscience dictated another—Newman did not think such clash probable—the Catholic would be bound to follow conscience. These teachings have now spread far amongst the young generation. Of course, while clear as to the distinction between Catholicism and Vaticanism, and determined to have no interference in domestic affairs, the Irish Catholic may well deem the Pontiff a gracious personality and

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symbol to be revered. His real purpose, as Newman suggested, is to guide and help. But that he or his advisers would ever help Ireland specially, particularly against an opposing English interest, is not credible by the average Irish Catholic. On Vaticanism he is a sceptic and a critic.

When all is said, however, it is mainly bishops and priests, not the Pope, that the Irish Catholic has to take into practical account, and his later relations towards these ecclesiastics, in national and theological matters, are revealed in subsequent pages.

Curiously enough, the issue of the "Ne Temere" decree attracted scarcely any attention in the country. Home interests were enlivening and engrossing, and—looking back to the first stage—I can only recall the incidental comment that the new Papal document was evidently intended specially for the French, who, it was assumed, were entirely competent to fight their own battle. Irish affairs in all those years took our supreme energies, though out-gazing, interested contributors, like Mr. Fred Ryan, defended Ferrer or emphasised the lesson of "Le Sillon," while now and then Mr. Robert Lynd sent us home a brilliant, suggestive study, but we usually left distant interests alone, unless, as in the case of the Joan of Arc celebrations, they could be made to point an Irish moral. When the new pronouncement came to be looked into more particularly it was variously regarded. Many remained indifferent; mixed marriages were outside their experience, and the question did not interest them; they would speak more strongly on the official order in Irish dioceses that a Catholic who entered a Protestant Church for any purpose,



even to act as "best man" at the wedding of a Protestant friend, committed a "sin" so great that its pardon was "reserved" for the bishop, not a local priest. Others thought that Catholics, Protestants, and Presbyterians would naturally like to be married by their own clergy, and that the "mixed" marriage really raised peculiar difficulties. More said that Popes and ecclesiastics must, of course, have some regulative power, and that non-Catholics who drew fearsome pictures of their autocracy and hypnotism forgot their own attitude in regard to the reigning monarch or even a judge. Some who were particularly interested in theology saw at once that the Papal pronouncement illustrated a peculiar new departure, and voiced their feelings accordingly. Newman had said, in the postscript to the "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk":—

"Mr. Gladstone seems to consider that there are only two ways of marrying, according to Catholic teaching; he omits a third, in which we consider the essence of the sacrament to lie. He speaks of civil marriage, and of marriage 'under the sanctions of religion,' by which phrase he seems to mean marriage with a rite and a minister. But it is also a *religious* marriage, if the parties, without a priest, by a mutual act of consent, as in the presence of God, marry themselves; and such a vow of each to other is, according to our theology, really the constituting act, the matter and form, the sacrament of marriage. That is, he omits the very contract which we specially call marriage. . . ."

A further point of Newman's is that "English non-Roman marriages" are held valid at Rome



“because parties who have already received the Christian rite of baptism proceed to give themselves to each other in the sight of God sacramentally, though they may not call it a sacrament.” Gladstone had said that Church of England marriages were, in the eyes of the Pope, “purely civil marriages.” Just the reverse, insisted Newman, they were considered “sacramental marriages.”

Newman was made a Cardinal after the publication of the reply to Gladstone. The apparent contradiction between his theology—that of the Rome of his day—and the law as laid down in the “*Ne Temere*” decree gave new force to complaints and criticism by the modernists. Yet all the time the question that most deeply concerned, and concerns, a certain Irish Catholic element is not that of the denomination of the clergyman who performs the marriage ceremony, but the far deeper matter of the mental and spiritual attitude of the contracting parties. This has long been with us, especially in connection with a peculiar Irish situation. Though not Catholic theology in theory, it is more than suggested in practice that rite and minister really make the marriage, and sanctify certain unions which many regard as odious—those that are the result of the sheer commercial system of “match-making,” described in other pages, and in later years criticised severely. It is another instance of the rising spiritual view in opposition to the formalistic view, the assumption that the clergyman is all-important rather than incidental. Some who wonder why Irish Catholics are not much moved by matters like the “*Ne Temere*” decree overlook the fact that a great many of them are pre-occupied

with problems like the above and others arising directly out of their own peculiar conditions and transitional circumstances.

One question which has caused immeasurably more feeling and discussion than any Papal pronouncement made directly or indirectly to Ireland is that of the clerical control of our primary education, not only religious but secular. It was exhaustively discussed, as already noted, in the *Irish Peasant*. The laity in scores of places had become keenly interested in matters of education. Apart from school concerns, the work done in Gaelic League branches, Coisdi Ceanntair, Feis Committees, Irish Training Colleges, Industrial Development Associations, and other bodies, showed a very practical zeal for what was in the broad sense education. Yet the conservative clergy stood sternly for undivided managerial control, and what was described as in practice the keeping of a rope round the neck of the teachers. They insisted that the interests of faith and morality demanded this dominance, and that opposition was inspired by "secularism" and hostility to religion. Broad-minded men like the Rev. Dr. McDonald, senior Professor of Theology in Maynooth, admitted the untenable and preposterous nature of this claim. At last it came to be more widely understood that the clerics were not managers in their priestly capacity, as many had innocently imagined, but were there by virtue of English legislation. England in theory objects to Rome rule and the "priest in the schools," but rules indirectly through Rome and sets the priest in complete managerial control of the vast majority of primary schools in Ireland. And a truly piquant

irony is that if a bill to institute even partial popular control were introduced at Westminster, the clerical managers would certainly endeavour to rouse an agitation against it, and—judging by numerous remarks of theirs—would passionately declare to their flocks: “The wicked English Government [whose representatives we are] wants to drive the priests and religion [which we personally seldom or never teach the pupils] out of the schools of Ireland, and substitute secularists and infidels [people whose religious training has been, or might have been, imparted by us]. Rally to your faithful priests who have been always the champions of Faith and Fatherland.”

Whether the Britons or the clergy have the more reason to laugh to themselves I cannot determine. It has been said that the most brilliant thing ever done by the Irish priests was the invention of the legend that they had been always on the side of the people. And I sometimes think the most brilliant and mordant touch of English irony is not in English literature but in English government and life—getting Rome to try to “keep us good” on the one hand, and on the other, putting the priest in pride of place over our schools and the teachers of our youth, and then inveighing against Rome rule, and calling us a priest-ridden people.

In Ireland itself an incidental little irony is that some of the Protestants who co-operate heartily in the new movements grow alarmed on occasion over Catholic lay criticism of bishops and priests, deeming it dangerously strong or indiscreet. They endeavour from time to time to put on the brake, so to say, and ensure gentler going and mellowness of temper. It



has been very amusing to see perturbed Protestants coming thus to the rescue of much-criticised Catholic ecclesiastics and their friends. Once in the high fever of the University agitation, described later on, Dublin students were so indignant over the attitude of bishops and others that they started a weekly paper, the *Irish Student*, the language of which was a fearful joy. Dr. Hyde, for all his diplomacy, was sorely taxed to bring about not peace but a more restrained and less unofficial way of carrying on hostilities. I was touched by other efforts of peace-making Protestants.

Protestants have made distinctive places for themselves in several lines and spheres. The great case of Dr. Hyde, the significant instances of Captain Otway Cuffe, and others, we shall see. Protestants sometimes did just the very work the outside reader would never expect. A young Protestant, Mr. Ernest Lane Joynt, one of our most interesting Irish writers, first made mark before he reached the age of twenty by an Irish study of Dr. Geoffrey Keating, the Irish historian and Catholic apologist of Shakespeare's time. A country Protestant clergyman contributed original poetry in Irish to the *Irish Nation*. Another Protestant, Conan O'Connell ("Conall Cearnach"), Celtic Lecturer in the new Belfast University, is one of our best Irish writers. The Rev. J. O. Hannay, rector of Westport, and widely known at home and abroad as "George A. Birmingham," has played a special part in our movements. A Belfast man, educated at Haileybury College, Hertford, and Trinity College, Dublin, it was Dr. Hyde's *Story of Early Gaelic Literature* which first revealed to him the fact that



there was an Irish literature, and prompted him to take up the work of learning modern Irish. When he came into contact with the working Gaelic League in the west he was immensely attracted by the honesty of purpose, independence of thought, enthusiasm, and hatred of pretence, which he found amongst the workers. His work for the Gaelic League and the industrial movement has been very sincere and many-sided. He believes that the great hope for Ireland is the revival among the people of a spirit of honesty and independence of thought, and a vigorous campaign against every kind of sham—especially the sham patriotism of the “spouter” and the publican—against every kind of lie whoever tells it. It is against what seemed to him to be shams that he directed the satire of his first two novels, *The Seething Pot* and *Hyacinth*. He now knows that they contain many mistakes and some grave injustices, but he was altogether sincere in writing them, and wished for nothing except the good of his country. Some of his criticism under the guise of fiction brought quaint storms around his head. Older Catholic clerics and a Board of Guardians were wroth with him; young priests and Catholic pressmen defended him. They did not agree with all the criticism, but they knew that Irish life was a rather complex and comprehensive thing, which very few knew as a whole, and the more delineation of it, the more criticism of it we had, the better. Agreement or disagreement with the criticism did not affect the literary issue at all; imagination—using the term in the true sense—was its own justification, and was under no obligation to consider even a Board

of Guardians. Besides his novels Mr. Hannay has published *The Spirit and Origin of Christian Monasticism* and *The Wisdom of the Desert*, a translation of some of the reliques of the Egyptian hermits of the fourth and fifth centuries, and an endeavour to illustrate and appreciate their religious spirit.

Irish Protestantism sometimes grew critical of itself. At one stage a prominent Irish writer, "Conan Maol," brought up an illuminating and candid discussion by an appeal to the Protestant bishops, through the *Irish Nation*, to take a prominent part in Irish social and intellectual work. Certain Protestant ecclesiastics, as I learned privately, were much pleased and moved by the terms of the appeal. In the public discussion one of the most interesting contributions was that of a well-known Ulster Protestant worker, Miss M. C. Dobbs:—

"I agree with 'Conan Maol,' that 'virility' does not depend on the particular form of religion to which one may belong. The Christian religion—Catholic, Greek, Anglican, Presbyterian—was never intended to develop business qualities. The Bible is mostly taken up with denunciations of the rich and their methods of money-making. 'Ulster' [another contributor] makes a grievous mistake if he thinks that commercial prosperity is any sign of a superior religion or of God's favour. . . . I don't like to have my Church held up for admiration as if it were a kind of commercial school or technical institute for turning out successful business men. It is nothing of the sort. Our spiritual life is far more real and deep than talk of this kind leads people to believe. There is an evangelical mysti-

cism in Protestantism which brings us very close to Christ, and perhaps insists almost too much on separation from worldly things. It wants to go into the desert and live on locusts and wild honey.

“What I think we Protestants want is a little real persecution. There’s nothing like it for sharpening spiritual insight and wakening up the indifferent. When a Church (like the Church in Spain) has things its own way it waxes fat and kicks and gets lazy. . . . Disestablishment did us a lot of good, but we have been so mightily pleased with ourselves for surviving, that we are in danger of getting self-satisfied again. It seems to me, on looking back on Irish history, that all the dreadful wars from Elizabeth’s time, the Penal Code, the persecutions and tyrannies, were perhaps designed to prevent the Irish Catholics from falling into the pit of materialism or atheism, that they might keep alive the spiritual flame which the Continental Catholic nations seem in danger of losing, and that when the Gaelic revival was born they might have the insight to receive it as the gift of God to compensate them for what they have gone through.

“That the Gaelic League is one of the outer signs of an inward rebirth of Ireland I have not the slightest doubt. That there is no limit to what Ireland may do in the future under the impulse of this inspiration I have not the slightest doubt either. We stand at present between the old civilisations of Europe and the new empire of America, as Greece of old stood between the old world of Asia Minor, Crete, Egypt, and the rising power of Rome. To every nation comes its supreme flowering time, and



it may well be that Ireland has as great a mission as Greece, and that we are fortunate enough to stand at its inception. But it is my sincere hope that whatever work lies before us we Protestants will be found to have played no mean part therein."

Of Presbyterian workers and sympathisers I had less direct experience, apart from a few striking types. The spirit of some who are new to Irish movements, but very ardent and fraternal, may be gathered from this message, received in the summer of 1911 :—

"... We had both, along with the other members of the —, been reading your book, *The Plough and the Cross*, and we felt that the same ideals as we held in our —, which is a branch of the —, were undoubtedly held and expressed by yourself and the [progressive] clerical and lay element of the Roman Catholic Church, whose cause you plead in your story. . . . We only got the length, after much thought, of formulating our aim at our meeting last month. . . . You can see that the thought behind the aim, so expressed, looks forward to the working together of both parties for the bringing of the kingdom of God in Ireland, and for the developing in the highest sense of Irish nationality for Christ's sake and the world's. . . . It seems to me that in my own Church (Irish Presbyterian) exactly similar things [to those described in the novel] are taking place, and although it is not defined even to the men who are taking part in the forward movements, there is at the back of it all the same inspiration of the national ideal."

There is, however, one great Irish Protestant who



has suffered sorely at the hands of Ireland. This is Mr. George Moore. We know that he is an Irish Protestant, because he has told us so. Some years ago, when Irish Catholic bishops had taken some particularly un-national action, Mr. Moore wrote with sad solemnity to the Dublin papers to declare that he could no longer remain in the same Church as their lordships: their conduct had driven him to Protestantism. Dublin for a long time did not recover from the shock, not of Mr. Moore's passing over to Protestantism, but of discovering that until the time of the crisis he had carried in his soul so much sensitive Catholicism. He broke with more than the Church of his fathers. He gave up his London flat, renounced the Anglo-Saxon people in various uncomplimentary interviews, and descending on Dublin bade Ireland be of good cheer; he would help her to save her language and her soul. She had been trying in a well-meaning way to do both, but, of course, even she, who did not always know a good thing when she saw it, would clearly understand that such distinguished patronage made a great difference. The prodigal son laid his "Untilled Field" at her feet. It was taken up by a genial Catholic Gael, Tadhg O'Donoghue ("Torna"), and a young Protestant student of T.C.D., Mr. O'Sullivan, and between them they turned it into Irish. Irish readers raised their eyebrows mildly, read the result with some interest, and went on with the work of life as if nothing wonderful had happened. Then the Playboy of the Eastern World took his next great step for the revival of Irish. He decided that it should be learned—by his nephew.

This event in modern Irish history is treated of by Miss Susan Mitchell in her lively little book, *Aids to the Immortality of Certain Persons in Ireland* :—

“I have puffed the Irish language, I have puffed the Irish soap ;

I have tried them—on my nephew, with the best results, I hope,

But with this older, dirtier George I have no heart to cope.”

The momentous change of creed is also celebrated, and we hear the convert sing in his ardour :—

“Come, little Papist maids, and sit on my converted knee,  
Bid me to live, and I will live, your Protestant to be.”

But things grew sadder and sadder. The simple-minded Irish people, who had not been educated up to modern ways, went on putting their trust in folk who had spoken Irish from childhood, and who now wrote books in Irish, as well as in people who taught Irish, and other people who learned Irish unobtrusively, rather than in a distinguished artist of the great world who saved the language vicariously through his nephew. They were plainly a plodding, absurdly practical folk, who must have lost about a thousand years ago the last trace of that “Celtic glamour” for which Europe still gave them credit. Mr. Moore, in those sombre moments that come to all artists, almost felt that he must go back to exile. However, he had the Abbey Theatre, with Synge and Yeats and Lady Gregory to challenge, tantalise, or amuse him ; he was within reach of the cosmic cheeriness of “A. E.,” and the stimulating intellectual pessimism of John Eglinton ; he could talk about cathedrals to Mr. Edward Martyn when they were friends ; so

Ireland, with an effort, he found endurable. In inspired moments he still had brave schemes for the language he had returned to save. Now it was to let loose the *Arabian Nights* in it, anon he felt that Maupassant would make it artistic and appetising. Neither of these pet schemes was hailed with joy. We all knew that original work fared better than translations. In point of fact part of the *Thousand and One Nights* was translated afterwards by Mr. Dermot Foley, an excellent Irish writer, but it made no special appeal; carrying wonder tales to Gaelic Ireland was like carrying water to the sea. Several other Irish writers tried their powers on translations; "Torna" rendered songs from Heine, also songs out of Welsh; Piaras Béaslai translated the famous tale of Peter Schlemihl from the German; Father Brennan songs of Beranger; and, amongst others, a curious version of the *Rubáiyát* of Omar Khayyám came to us all the way from America. Some of the translations were distinctly good, but, as a rule, the authors' original work was the more acceptable. Mr. Moore's faith in the transforming and uplifting power of one translated classic or masterpiece was the most touching and romantic thing in his career.

In May 1910 he performed his supreme feat for the Gael. He ate the historic lunch that saved the Irish language. Or rather he and Count Lutzow ate it together, for the distinguished diplomatist and litterateur lunched with him in Dublin, and told him, as they partook of the good things, the story of the Czechic, or Bohemian, language revival. After lunch Mr. Moore rose up with a full heart to impart to the Irish race the electrifying information that once upon



a time a national language had been revived—in Bohemia. “We have found,” he said, in his historic communication to the daily papers, “a parallel which proves that the Irish language can be revived if the people really wish it, because the analogy is as complete as could be wished for.” (Apparently were the analogy not complete our case would be hopeless.) To give the reader an idea of the novelty and the pertinence of this precious information, it need only be mentioned that, many years earlier, people had got tired of hearing the story of the Bohemian and other European language revivals, while in the Irish movement there had been achievements and developments that the pioneers at the start would have regarded as a fairy tale. Mr. Moore obtained full credit for his tidings of great joy; “the lunch that saved a language” had ample justice accorded it. We said that thousands of years hence Irish sages and philosophers would probably fill libraries with subtle volumes on the question whether Mr. Moore’s language-saving lunch was literal or symbolistic. The war of Realist and Idealist would rage around it. The general Irish mind in the untravelled future would doubtless decline to take it literally. Mr. Moore would have grown vast and vague as “Hermes” or “Orpheus,” and might be taken to mean a man, or many men and teachers, or a race, or a civilisation, or a system of philosophy. A convenient and popular theory would be that “Moore”—who Lunched—meant a whole series of seekers and writers who in the twentieth century imbibed and filled themselves to overflowing with the traditional lore and wisdom of the Gael, and reproduced



it in brilliant new books that proved the intellectual and spiritual bread of life to their race and generation. Taking the historic "Moore Lunch" as a mere material repast in the Dublin of one hour of time would be ridiculed, by idealists at any rate, as a degradation of a sublime fact, a subtle series of acquisitions and creations.

If Mr. Moore eventually gave up reviving the very lively Irish language and cut himself adrift, or was sent adrift, from his bewildering race, Ireland bears him no ill-will. Quite the contrary. Miss Mitchell has sung of him before his first repentant home-returning days :—

"O Eire !<sup>1</sup> he was false to you, your big and artless child,  
His pink-and-white simplicity by Sasanach defiled !"

But no ! Ireland insists that there was no defilement, that it is only in his artistic capacity he shocks the proprieties, that as private gentleman and citizen he is almost intolerable in his virtue, almost tedious in his decorum. Certain confessions about himself are attributed to the acquisition, in his Paris years, of the Frenchman's habit of making himself out to be a great deal worse than he really is. As a witty Dublin lady said, "Some men kiss and tell; Mr. Moore tells but does not kiss." So he is really a servant of Ireland sent away with a good "character."

<sup>1</sup> Eire (Air'-ä) nominative and vocative cases; Eirinn, dative; Eireann, genitive.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE COMING OF THE GAELIC LEAGUE

CONNRADH na Gaedhilge, or the Gaelic League, started humbly and modestly in the early nineties of the last century, is in some respects the most surprising, but from other points of view the most natural, development in modern Ireland. To many thousands of Irishmen and Irishwomen, whose lives might otherwise have been wasted, it has brought the knowledge of a varied native culture and given the sense that they have a country in which they can lead fruitful and spacious lives. In an ever-deepening degree it has re-discovered Ireland for them, or, to express it in another way, it has enabled them to discover something hitherto undreamt of in themselves. It arose in a time of demoralisation, recrimination, and confusion consequent on the tragic fall and passing of Parnell. To the practical and superficial observer in Dublin and the eastern and central places, and in many even of the west and south, its dream of the extension here, and the revival there, of the Irish language, and its general cultivation, oral and literary, was as vain as the revival of Druidism. Even hundreds in the south, the west, and the north, who knew the language well, were not optimistic about it or about anything else in existence. And while, even in the darkest years of the later nineteenth century, there had

always been some faithful writers of Irish, and collectors of the copious Gaelic lore still surviving amongst the remote people, it had not been heard in most of the pulpits or schools, and had not been used by most professional and public men in the generality of Irish counties for a couple of generations.

Still there were Irish scholars, Irish text-books, volumes of Irish tales and sermons, stores of Irish manuscripts, Irish language societies that worked on academic lines with little thought or relation to life, while there were known to be over three-quarters of a million Irish speakers in Ireland alone, with thousands of others who had a share of Irish, and tens of thousands who spoke an English somewhat like literally translated Irish. The number of Irish speakers in America, Britain, &c., was still very large. Altogether beyond the Shannon and the Galtees and away in the north-west there was plenty of living Irish; the speakers who habitually used it had a very extensive vocabulary, and with them the tongue had preserved a marked precision and purity, explained in part by their conservative habits and the long practice of memorising traditional hero-tales, folk-stories, and poetry. So in its own sphere, though that sphere was receding, the language was still very much alive, and in places where it was little more than a memory there was a certain feeling for it, in the consciousness or the subconsciousness of the people. This, as some will readily understand, proved a far-reaching factor. At the same time the main trend of later Irish thought, so far as it was thought, had been away from the Gael and the Gaelic ideals till the majority of Irish-



men had lost all conscious sense of national continuity or tradition. While avowedly in political clash with England, or at any rate the governing powers and representatives of England, three-fourths of Ireland, in externals and more, had been growing anglicised; the people had ceased to cultivate their own minds and powers, and what they imported and assimilated was never England's best and often her worst. In the political, social, and mental circumstances of the time, an appeal to them to reverse their attitude, revive or extend Irish speech, and develop a distinctive native self and consciousness, might well seem visionary. It was like reminding the average man that his soul is his most important concern, and that from morn to eve, in shop or office or factory, he must make it his guiding and dominating interest. He might agree in theory but his practice, it is to be feared, would be unsatisfactory.

The unexpected happened. After a period of toil and teaching in obscurity, the Gaelic League pioneers began to succeed to an extent far beyond their initial hopes. Doubtless those who have studied the expressive stories of the language revivals in Bohemia, Hungary, Denmark, Belgium, Finland, the Balkan States, and elsewhere, will not be surprised. Those who seriously estimate what an expressive and long sedulously cultivated native language must mean, psychologically and otherwise, to a people, will think the success within the fitness of things, based on inevitable though not entirely obvious laws. Be that as it may, by the end of the century Connradh na Gaedhilge had become a power in Ireland, objectively and subjectively. Apart from its constructive work it had sown a plentiful crop of productive



criticism. It began and encouraged a general national examination of conscience ; every institution in the land was shown how it had sinned against itself and the soul and vitality of the nation by its neglect of the national language. Political leaders, on the whole, heard the plainest truths, mainly on the subject of the distinction between politics and nationality and on the flowery phrase-making they had substituted for serious thinking.

The political leaders, in the main, with hundreds of their followers, were either indifferent or hostile to the language movement for years. (Some of these leaders are not exactly ardent supporters even yet.) Their attitude was similar to that of numerous Germans, Danes, or Finns in the earlier years of the German, Danish, or Finnish revivals. Many Irishmen by this time did not know Irish history in the broad sense ; they only knew more or less of the outer struggle between England and Ireland, which is a very different matter. Of Irish psychology and civilisation in the great sense they had no more notion than of Greek or Egyptian. To them everything Gaelic was something "primitive" or an inappreciable "remnant." They thought that "Irish literature" began with Tom Moore. And even as their conception of the past was limited and petty, so their vision of their own immediate selves and possibilities was also limited and modest. Patriotism with them was not an enthusiasm or a faith, but an inherited tendency or a mood, responsive in the main only to surface politics. There had been little to awaken their national consciousness. Church and School, Professions and Press, had forgotten the deeper Ireland.

Amongst the earliest pioneers of the Gaelic League were three men of singularly diverse types and predilections, each an arresting individuality destined to make a deep impression on the new Irish generation. One was a young Protestant layman who had had a brilliant career at Trinity College, Dublin, the second was a young priest in Maynooth, the third a young Catholic layman from Ulster. To understand the trio and their place and significance is to see well inward into Ireland.

As a boy in the north Connacht home of his father, a Protestant clergyman, Douglas Hyde had been lovingly drawn to the hearths and customs, the stories and songs of his Irish-speaking neighbours. Eager and social-hearted, he went from home to home and was as one of the people themselves. Adopting a folk-lore term, the old men called him "An Craoibhin Aoibhinn,"<sup>1</sup> or the Pleasant Little Branch. He afterwards adopted the title as his literary pen-name, and to this day, in conversation or writing, he is more often referred to as "An Craoibhin" than as Dr. Hyde—as men refer to "The Prime Minister" or "The Chancellor." After his Trinity College career he turned again to the firesides and fields of the western people, and lovingly and systematically collected a store of their folk-stories and their songs. As far back as 1889 a volume of the stories, in the original Irish, had appeared in Dublin. It was dedicated to the Rev. Euseby D. Cleaver, a Protestant clergyman, who had been an enthusiast for Gaelic studies for a generation. Several such volumes were to follow, many of the stories, in French and German translations, along with the Irish originals, going far

<sup>1</sup> Kreev'een Eev'-en, approximately.

through Europe. In the matter of lyrics, Dr. Hyde was also an extensive collector; at an early stage he gave us the memorable Love-Songs of Connacht, and in succeeding years, part by part, the great collection of the Religious Songs of Connacht, a fine example of a Protestant's devoted doing of the work which Catholics neglected.

The young and modest Gaelic League was exceedingly happy in the selection of Dr. Hyde as its president, though probably neither it nor he had more than a dim inkling of the fact. Apart from his wide linguistic and literary culture he was stored with not only the heroic lore but the humblest popular lore of the Gael. He spoke Irish and wrote Irish prose in the direct and racy folk-tale manner, while his original Irish songs were even more simple and more naïve than the traditional songs of the Connacht people—something very different from the lays of the older bards and the later strains of the Munster poets. He had a magnetic presence and appealing platform gifts. Whether he spoke in Irish or English he imparted to his oratory a freshness, naturalness, and verve in winning contrast to the traits of a generation of political speeches and several generations of sermons. His earnestness, frankness, and humour were unfailing, and the skill with which he made strong points without any wounding of theological, political, or personal susceptibilities, showed a delicate art. Indeed his tactful spirit has always been one of the assets of the Gaelic League. Gradually he came to be regarded as an embodiment of the essence, romance, and flavour of the Gaelic civilisation. There are national and popular individualities, generally of the past, whom to think about makes our own minds creative; one of these, in the



living present, is emphatically Douglas Hyde. Much of the mind of the new generation has been unconsciously called out of stagnation and set growing by his work and individuality. Strenuous and toilsome labour has been sweetened and made mellow by his natural raciness and his humour. No savant of whom I ever heard had a finer homeliness. He often brings the sense of a cheery country fireside to a great Gaelic festival, as on the occasion in Dublin when he recited his original ode, "An Préachán Mór." This means the great crow or rook, a bird which is a notorious nuisance in Irish potato-fields. Dr. Hyde's Great Crow was anglicisation; and the havoc it wrought in the gardens of Pádraig, and the direct method of scaring it away, were set forth with such vivid homeliness that the "Préachán Mór" became as much a household word as the devil or the weather. "An Craoibhin's" folk-spirit and large simple-heartedness are shown in his short Irish plays, one of the most popular of which concerns the adventures of a tinker and a fairy. He himself on occasion has played the part of the tinker, surely the only LL.D. who has thus stooped to conquer. I once met him in Dublin, eager in the quest of a hat ugly enough to suit him in this part. The incident is described in one of the Irish novels that appeared in the *Irish Nation*, and a translation will convey a sense of the Dublin Gael's attitude to Dr. Hyde. The scene was a noted meeting-place of poets, story-tellers, artists, and others:—

"The boys became more hilarious in the other room. Gruagach of the Gaiety went out. After a while he came back, and Douglas of the West along with him.

"'Every sage, every druid, every poet, every man



famed throughout Eire, comes one day to the Stad,' said the Gruagach. 'Now the hero of the West is in our midst. It is a sad case that he did not send me a telegram, so that there might be a feast before him.'

"A welcome and twenty were accorded the hero, and high glee arose.

" 'Sorrow is on me that I cannot bide long,' said Douglas. 'I am on the quest of a hat: an old hat, and an old hat as ugly as it is possible for an old hat to be. I am in quest of it since the going down of the sun. I have tested a hundred. They were ugly and tattered beyond question, but not one of them would meet my need.'

" 'Did you search Trinity College?' asked Philip.

" 'Ah, don't be jesting, you rascal,' said Douglas; 'it is not a cause of laughter, but a cause of woe.'

" 'One would think that old hats were as plentiful in Dublin as old poetry,' said Kevin, and he looked at Taidhgin.

" 'And, in the name of the Stad, what have you to do with an old hat, O Friend of the Gael?' asked the Gruagach.

" 'We'll be playing the Tinker and the Fairy in a couple of days——'

" 'That is known to all of us, but——'

" 'I it is who will be the Tinker,' said Douglas. 'That exactly is the reason I am wanting an ugly old hat. But by all seeming an old hat bad enough for a tinker is not to be found in all Dublin. A stylish place it is.'

" 'My heart-burning woe! My biting north wind!' said Taidhgin. 'A poet and a man of learning and the leader of the Gael going on a stage as a tinker!

My tormenting grief! We are lost now or never. The fashionable will bid the League farewell!’

“‘It is all the same what hat you wear, O Chief of ours,’ said Kevin. ‘The Gael will always see a wonder-helmet on your head.’

“‘Or a golden halo——,’ said the Gruagach.

“‘It is time for me to be off with myself,’ said Douglas, ‘when ye grow so flattering’ (*plámásach*).

“Philip thought of a truly ugly old hat in his hotel. He brought it, and it delighted Douglas so much you would think it was a jewel.

“‘Beyond all I ever saw!’ said Taidhgin when Douglas was gone.

“‘It makes one joyous,’ said Kevin. ‘The spirit is simple and wonderful at the same time. It is a delightful thing that there are such workers in Eire.’”

Father O’Growney was a young Meath priest of delicate constitution and burning enthusiasm for Irish studies. Irish had long been neglected in Maynooth, but he made it a reality; when he was appointed to the chair of Irish a new era for the language began in the great ecclesiastical College. His gentle individuality, his simple devotedness had a lasting effect on students. He was the first noted type of the Irish-minded young Maynoothman of whom latter-day Ireland has heard and known so much. His series of graduated Irish lessons, that sold by hundreds of thousands in the earlier years of the Gaelic League, helped learners far and wide; even now when there are far more modern and scientific text-books and hundreds of expert teachers, the little green-backed “O’Growney” is regarded with a certain affection. Father O’Growney gave a large part of the young Maynooth of his time a deci-

sive impetus towards Irish culture, and incidentally he prepared the way for a certain spirit of equality and fraternity between young clerics and laics. In a fragile frame, with an unpretending nature, he was a host in himself, because he was simple and great enough to feel the heart and understand the vision of his own people. He was alive with the finer consciousness of Ireland. He broke down at an early stage, and after much suffering and vain voyaging and journeying for health he died in California, to the grief of the new generation and many of the old. His has remained a fragrant memory and a beloved name. As the Irish poet sang: "Is beo a thaisè, ni marbh acht saoghal do" (His spirit lives, one life of his only is gone).

Eoin (or John) MacNeill was born in Glenarm, Co. Antrim, in 1867, and educated in St. Malachy's College, Belfast. He entered the Civil Service, which he left only a couple of years ago to become Professor of early and mediæval Irish history in the National University. A great deal of his Gaelic education was gained, like Synge's, in the homes and haunts of the people in the Aran Islands, whither he first went in 1890, in which year began his acquaintance and his intimate friendship with Father O'Growney. He was the first honorary secretary of the Gaelic League, and for a long time the editor of its weekly bi-lingual organ, *An Claidheamh Soluis*. He has ever been one of its strongest leaders, one of its clearest thinkers, while a certain gentle reserve seems ever to accompany his strength and temper his enthusiasm. He is a philosopher in the true sense, and so he seems apart, at times isolated, amongst the people who love colour and



romance in life as well as in language. The lucidity and force with which he can state a case or an ideal they find impressive and striking ; what they cannot understand is why he does not grow passionate or picturesque. Some find his calm force in a way inhuman. The fact is he sees the whole Gaelic ideal so clearly, and it has become so much a part of himself, that to his philosophic nature the notion of growing impassioned about it would be ludicrous. One might as fitly grow impassioned about starlight as opposed to murky darkness.

Since he began his public work he has preached revolutionary theories about the Celts in Ireland. He maintains that we are mostly Iberian. Some of us do not mind one way or the other ; if he proves it we shall feel just as human as ever. Race-theories any way have done something to spoil the drama of life. We sympathise with him in the fact that he "has no use" for imaginary Celtic characteristics and the pathetic nonsense about "fatalism," &c., that springs from superficial theorising thereon. "Celts" and "Celtic" critics have been too much with us—Celtic poets, of course, are welcome in so far as they give us any real poetry. Strange theories of what was "Celtic" came into fashion after Mommsen, Renan, and Matthew Arnold, though in literary circles rather than in life, and being "Celtic" certain things in national and individual proceeding and fortune were regarded as "inevitable." With Mr. MacNeill we have put that childish little theory to sleep in practice.

The Gaelic League pioneers faced facts, they worked with a fine faith, and did not trouble themselves much about anybody's mere theories.



## CHAPTER V

### THE STUDIOUS IRELAND OUTSIDE THE SCHOOLS

THE Gaelic League worked from the outset in a simple and democratic way. It attracted some earnest young men and women in Dublin, and some old folk for whom its zest and spirit renewed their youth. In the country and in Irish centres abroad, once it emerged from obscurity, it had fairly early responses. Here, in a time of political disillusion and confusion was something like a garden of peace, and the constructive programme and the broad national teaching of men like MacNeill and Hyde set thinking those in the mood to think. The League was strictly non-political and non-sectarian from the start. Apart from its Irish teaching it encouraged the frank and joyous social spirit always after the Irish heart at its best. Little class distinctions that had become a mingled curse and comedy in Irish towns were gaily ridiculed. A speaker or teacher of Irish, some one who could sing an Irish song or tell an Irish story, was rated higher than all the "tone" and "style" in the land. But work was the great essential. When few or many sympathisers came together in any town or country place, formed a "craobh" or branch, and had it affiliated with the parent body in Dublin, they realised that there were large and steady tasks before them. Procedure would vary according to the district. In Irish-speaking or partly Irish-speaking

quarters the conditions were necessarily very different from those in which Irish had not been habitually spoken for a generation or more. But sometimes there would be a native speaker or two or several at work in such a place, and consequently after some practice and effort a possible teacher or two. Or a primary schoolmaster, or a young priest fresh from Maynooth, and anxious to be worthy of Father O'Growney, would take up the work of class instruction. Very often a young man or woman boldly took up the O'Growney text-books, ploughed away for a time at the lessons, with the aid of the pronunciation "keys," and then faced a class and took it over the same stages. Any old Irish speaker in the neighbourhood, or within walking or driving distance, who could be got to correct amateur pronunciation, and repeat greetings, blessings, proverbs, songs, and so on, was a godsend. Lists were made of all the surviving Irish words and phrases in the English speech; a quarter that had anything from a couple of hundred to a thousand felt some reason to be proud of itself. But gradually as the League grew stronger as an organisation the general scheme of teaching was revolutionised. For one thing, summer schools were set on foot, and then more ambitious summer colleges, where teachers of various stages were instructed still more scientifically in the teaching of the language on the *Modh Direach*, or direct method, were established in centres in Donegal, Mayo, Galway, Kerry, Cork, and Waterford. These were—and still are—attended in their holiday weeks by primary school teachers, young priests in and out of Maynooth, and general Gaelic Leaguers anxious to be

experts. In this way there gradually arose a supply of instructors of a new order. These summer institutions, in picturesque haunts, have worked with system and spirit, and in themselves are intensely interesting. Gradually also the League was set in the position to employ a staff of Irish-speaking organisers, each of them working over a fairly large area, with a number of Muinteoiri Taisdil, or travelling teachers, acting under him in turn. The organisers' duties are large and general: starting branches, addressing meetings, interviewing managers and teachers regarding the state and furtherance of Irish in the local schools, helping towards the extended use of Irish in homes and in business, superintending the work of the various travelling teachers, and a score of other things. Each travelling teacher has of course a smaller area for his scope, but large enough in its way, and often rather trying in the wintry weather. He teaches Irish evening by evening to adults and children in branches that have not teachers or sufficient teachers of their own, and acts on mornings or afternoons as extern teacher of Irish in primary schools where the regular staff is not yet qualified. (The language is taught in some 3000 primary schools.) He also helps in the organising of social features in the various centres, and takes his turn as Irish singer, reciter, musician, and even dancer: a minister of popular culture and of sociability. The travelling teachers, who include a few ladies, are altogether most interesting personalities, like the organisers—theirs is an interesting new profession in Ireland—and some of them are amongst our best writers of Irish.



This general statement of mine can give little idea of the great teaching and social scheme carried out by the Gaelic League over the country, with special attention to the Irish-speaking districts, or of the difference it has made in so many places, progress of course depending on the degree of local zeal and persistence. Apart from the Irish and musical side of the scheme attention is often given to the furtherance of local industries, the Gaelic Leaguer looking to the body as well as the soul of the nation. The organisers, and through them the principal travelling teachers, send regular reports in Irish to the executive of the Gaelic League at Rutland Square, Dublin. For a goodly period, as chairman of the organisation committee, I studied every detail of them; it was a strangely arresting record of labour, devotion, difficulty, and achievement; the whole affording a unique insight into a studious Ireland outside the schools. I often thought and said that the fortunes of the organisers and travelling teachers of the Gaelic League ought to be a matter of intense national interest. They are doing work that is bound to have a vital influence on the Irish history of the near future. What Ireland's political destiny is to be is a mystery yet, though we all trust that it may be bright and beneficent; but we fondly hope, and feel with some confidence, that she will develop a vigorous intellectual, artistic, and social character, illustrating new resources of mind and the old deftness of hand and joy in work under congenial and natural conditions. The organisers and travelling teachers are helping and working with the rising spirit that makes these things possible.



There has never been anything academic about the Gaelic League. It has directed its special efforts towards the people with whom Irish is a living language. Visits to, and holidays in, the Irish-speaking districts became popular from the outset with eastern and central students; native speakers were trained as teachers and set where they were needed and demanded; training colleges, similar to the summer institutions in the Irish-speaking districts, were established in Dublin and Belfast (where Irish makes steady progress), and work through the autumn, winter, and spring. "Caint na ndaoine," the speech of the people, has been everywhere the ideal of students. The texts and tales published year by year have been for the most part in natural and popular Irish. We have a number of writers whose prose is just like country speech. Old Irish and Middle Irish, in which there is an extensive literature, are of course mainly matters for scholars and specialists—the School of Irish Learning in Dublin teaches them much as Latin or Greek or Sanscrit is taught, but that is another thing altogether. Even Early Modern Irish, like that of the stately and impressive Dr. Geoffrey Keating, contemporary of Shakespeare, is rather remote and difficult ground to the general Irish speaker and student, though by this time he is tolerably familiar to the more literary, and a few writers illustrate his influence. Dozens of old and early modern tales and poems have found new life and acceptance in modernised forms or capably annotated editions. But in style, though not always in subject and interest, the newer popular literature is reflective of our own day.

Very early in the century the Gaelic League had attained a spacious development as a teaching, propagandist, publishing, intellectual, and social organisation. Of course, in the very diverse circumstances of Ireland, a land in a transition stage, and with unnatural and evil traditions to live down, its fortunes necessarily have been varying; certain of its difficulties and triumphs we must consider separately. Often, also, when for convenience we speak of change or achievement wrought by the Gaelic League we are really referring to enkindled consciousness and exalted character in people to whose lives it has been the means of giving a new impulse and direction, who have found a quickened sense of the romance and purpose of life in themselves and their co-workers. The new *camaraderie* and zest and colour it has meant for thousands in different classes and creeds form to some minds its most appealing result. At an early stage, apart from the branch classes and other local meetings, general periodical or annual gatherings of a literary, artistic, and social character were organised, and these musters of kindred spirits have brought a new "note" into Irish life. First came the all-Ireland festival, the Oireachtas,<sup>1</sup> in Dublin, held for some years in May, next in August, and under present arrangements in the first week of July. With its Irish language, literary, historical, story-telling, and varied musical and other competitions for children and adults, with its Irish plays, concerts, conferences, and industrial exhibitions, with its numerous

<sup>1</sup> Approximately, Er'-och-thas, or Er-och'-thas: "ch" sounded as in "loch."

social revels, its democratic blending of classes and creeds, its rallies of town and village and remote rural character, and its Irish visitors from abroad, the Oireachtas is unique. It is more literary than the Welsh National Eisteddfod, and some of the social glee reminds me of descriptions of the Fair of Seville. For some years past town and country centres, north, south, east, and west, have had their own great annual festivals also; nowadays almost every one of them is greater and more picturesque than an early Oireachtas. These festivals, known as Feiseanna,<sup>1</sup> usually start with that of Wexford at Whitsuntide, and the series continues till the late autumn. Sometimes on a particular day there are half-a-dozen Feiseanna in different parts of the country, all with similar competitions, social features, and often industrial exhibitions. They mean gala days in the various towns, and bring to a head the quiet work of many months in branch classes, schools, homes, and sometimes workshops and gardens. One who could go on a round of the more typical ones, week by week, taking the Oireachtas in due course, visiting also the Gaelic training colleges, and following in the winter and spring something of the work of the travelling teachers already described, would see a rather vivid and joyous Ireland, exceedingly rich in character, and illustrating a new kind of intensive culture. Somehow at the great festivals we seem to live on the bolder and freer plane of the heroic sagas; there is a sense of spiritual electricity in the atmosphere; and scores of figures that have become familiar personages in this new Gaeldom

<sup>1</sup> Feis (Fesh) singular; Feiseanna (Fesh'-ănă) plural.



stand out clear and distinctive as characters in those ancient stories that are perennially alive and human.

It is necessarily in Irish that we find the more intimate expression of the life and meaning of these festivals, though modern Irish prose as yet is rather more objective than subjective in its interests. The translation of a passage or two of an Oireachtas study will show how the festival is looked at from the Irish side:—

“Philosophers say that there is a master-mind, a larger life, in every individual, though concealed and unrecognised save in exceptional moments. When ecstasy or exaltation is upon him, this larger life in a sense arises and comes to a head, and the habitual self departs. He sees then that there is some wondrous, mystical bond between his soul and the spirit of the universe. The same happens in the case of a nation. Then the nation understands that the kingdom of heaven is near it. Such is the story of Eire of the Gael in the days of the Oireachtas.

“The Greek believed that during one of the great festivals of old he was as large as all Greece. He understood then the divinity that was in himself. He was in unison with the gods of Greece. In the same way our souls are exalted during the Oireachtas. We seem to dwell in a land more delightful and more glorious than the Ireland of the customary day, and feel that our nation is a great spiritual companionship. Ours is a sacred, heavenly spirit during these days. Were it to last we would soon have the golden age. And why is it not lasting? Ours is the fault. It would last did we will it.

“It is said that far from home are the wonders.



It is untrue. In ourselves are the great wonders. But they are hidden almost always. In an exceptional time, like that of the Oireachtas, we see and feel in a measure where they are. That is the prime good of the festival; it reveals to us the power, the great essence, the transcendent mind that are in us unknown to us. Great were it could we bring them into use and being. Then we would have a true civilisation in the land.

"Much is being said of socialism throughout Europe. We see one form of socialism during the Oireachtas: an intellectual and spiritual socialism. Many share their mental riches with the masses, every one works for the sake of cause and neighbours and country. All of us are partakers in the wealth and treasure of the Oireachtas. None is covetous, all are satisfied. That is the spirit of real socialism.

"We have an untilled field of intellect here in Ireland. It is time for us to cultivate it actively, earnestly, and faithfully. There is no danger that the harvest will be otherwise than beautiful and wondrous. According as the intellectual spirit of the Oireachtas strengthens, we shall set before us the good and benefit of the land as a whole, in the social sense and in the spiritual sense. But the first thing and the greatest thing we have to do is to awaken our higher mind, to reveal and apply the hidden divinity that is within ourselves."

During Oireachtas Week the annual council of delegates from Gaelic League branches is also held in Dublin. This is known as the Ard-Fheis,<sup>1</sup> and is always a distinctive assembly. It shows the variety

<sup>1</sup> Aurdh-Esh; literally, high or chief Feis, Feis in this case meaning a deliberative gathering not a festival.

of character and class that characterises the Gaelic League generally, the same earnestness of purpose and democracy of spirit. Catholics and Protestants, priests and laymen, primary school teachers, civil servants, doctors, shopkeepers and shop assistants, workers of various grades, are included in the muster. The proceedings last for three days, and of late years have been entirely in Irish. All the affairs of the League are reviewed—organisation, publication, finance, &c., and in one form or another the anomalies and drawbacks of Irish education systems are generally under review. Indeed the assembly might often be described as an educational Parliament. The Ard-Fheis elects the Coisde Gnotha, or executive of the League, for the ensuing year. The discussions are generally animated but mostly to the point, talking for its own sake being almost unknown in the League's councils. The variety of individuality and of styles of speaking, the directness yet frequent richness and raciness of language, the sometime novelty of local idioms and phrases, the unconscious music in phrasing, the bursts of drollery or poetry, now and then on thorny questions, the prevailing fineness of *blas* (accent and flavour) by which the Irish speaker sets so much store—all make the congress intensely interesting from the human and linguistic points of view. Practically all those men and women are proved workers in their own localities, and they take things on the whole with the fine seriousness that yet knows how to be genial. On a couple of occasions, as we shall see, the Ard-Fheis has had to deal with clerical questions of an acute character. It has faced and finished them without either weakness or passion.

It is impossible to estimate even approximately the number of people who in one way or another have come under the influence of the Gaelic League. The large membership of the 1400 branches on its rolls (several very powerful, many moderately large, some small) is not fully indicative of its strength. The home truths preached at its public meetings, the verve and music of its festivals, have affected thousands who are not regular workers. It has come home to everybody concerned in or connected with Irish education, and made a deep difference already in the popular sense of what that education ought to be. The number of folk in high and humble stations it has made speakers, readers, and even writers of Irish, is very large. Its indirect effects in the way of temperance, manliness, intelligent national spirit, are considerable. It has diverted hundreds of individual lives into new channels and destinies, and even drawn many home to work again in Ireland—in this connection the London Gaelic League, for instance, has expressive stories to tell. Developments abroad, like the establishment of the Gaelic League Alliance throughout the United States in 1911, do not come within my present purpose, beyond noting that the moral and material result may be considerable.

Most interesting of all is the League's effect even thus early on conceptions of life, and incidentally its experiences in sundry ways with Churchmen. And those who know much of the trend of young minds now in certain of the schools and colleges expect far greater results, both creative and critical, in the near future.



## CHAPTER VI

### WAR ABOUT WOMAN

THE clash of Gaelic and Roman conceptions of man, woman, and life, in early and late mediæval years, and even in modern times, has been far greater than is generally imagined. England, or England's representatives in Ireland, came unconsciously to the aid of Rome again and again. The ruin of the Gaelic order and culture on the one hand, and the penal laws against Catholics on the other, had an effect that England neither intended nor understood: they set the priest and what he chose to teach in a pride of place, popularity, and dominance impossible of attainment otherwise. The position of the priests as the managers of Irish primary schools, under the ægis of England, since the early thirties of the nineteenth century, has been a great further factor for Romanisation and clericalism as against Gaelicism. I use the term "Romanisation," because it is expressive and convenient. It is not to be associated with essential Catholicism; in the opinion of sundry Irish Catholic laymen and not a few priests there is a good deal in Vaticanism and clericalism which is anything but Catholicism. And doubtless in their deepest and purest essence essential Christianity and Gaelicism are at one. But often as manifested and interpreted in Ireland Christianity has seemed a

strange importation. The spirit of the great old stories and the popular lays that have never really lost their hold on the Gael is in utter contrast to much in the Roman conception as usually understood. Young clerics themselves admit the beauty and appeal of the old lore that is ever living because it sprang from deep hearts and exalted experiences. "Irish literature has from the beginning set forth a noble ideal of womanhood. Whether it is Deirdre the pagan or Liadain the Christian, woman appears almost divine, a sort of intermediary between earth and heaven. . . . The Brehon Law clearly lays down the rights of woman, and the independence of her position in real life is only what might be expected from her dignified position in poetry and romance." So said one such cleric, a gifted Meath seminary Professor, in a lecture to the Gaelic Society of Art Students, Dublin, in June 1906. In the same lecture he said: "The romance of Cuchulainn and Emer in Pagan times cannot be surpassed for beauty of thought and delicacy of feeling." These stories have never ceased to be a living influence in parts of Ireland, and, what is more important, the ideal of woman, so sharply opposed to the average ecclesiastical view, has not been destroyed amongst sections of the people. In well-remembered Gaelic lore the beginning of love is associated with godliness and immortal music; the magical birds of Angus Og (Aonghus Og), the God of Love, sing above the lovers.

" Beautiful is the beginning of love,  
A youth and a maid and the birds of Angus above  
them."

Angus and his birds have become wonderfully vivid in the latter-day Irish imagination. In verse and prose and discourse they are much with us. The return and re-manifestation of Angus might form the theme of a delicate causerie. Mr. Standish O'Grady, who in a brilliant prose revel before the rise of the Gaelic League had himself paid tribute to the mystic birds, thought in later years that the cult thereof was in the way of being overdone, and he pleaded for peace, or at least less rapture, in their regard; but he pleaded in vain. "If music be the food of love, play on," said Shakespeare, and young Ireland bids the birds of Angus sing on. But this is by the way. A popular illustration of the sheer and sometimes violent clash of clerical and Gaelic ideas is afforded by certain of the Dialogues between Oisín and Patrick, some of which are readily recited to this day by western country folk. They have also passed from hand to hand in various manuscripts—even in the nineteenth century we had tireless transcribers—and in some printed books; the edition before me, *Ossianic Society's Transactions*, vol. iv., was printed in Dublin in 1859, a date when many people imagine that Irish literature and its publication were entirely neglected. With vigour of heart and loving vision Oisín defends the old pre-Patrician life of prowess and sporting, of learning, hospitality, and cheer, of the ardour of comrades and the love of woman, of the virtues of courage, truth, generosity, sincerity, and clean-heartedness; and with a frankness and freedom that are sometimes almost startling ridicules the new clerics of the lean views and leaner virtues, the crooked croziers, and, to his brave, simple spirit,



the still more crooked philosophy. And Patrick's answer again and again is the time-honoured sentence of damnation; he replies to opposition with the threat of hell, though he differs from many of his modern successors through a certain mildness of mood and utterance. "Is maireg bheir taobh re cléir ná clog" (Woe to him that trusts in clerics or bells), says Oisín; he proudly declares that, old and feeble as he is, were two of his bygone comrades on the scene, by every way they went of old they would go again despite the clerics; the missing of a deer in his heyday would give him more concern than if all the clerics lost their heads; he would prefer a sight of the old clan of the stout arms to the whole troop of crooked croziers; the preacher's voice is dull and without cheer to him, he yearns for the blackbird's song and a trout in the rivulet; a cleric more hospitable than Fionn never sat in a church; he (Oisín) has a good claim on God, suffering among clerics as he does: without feasting, without music, without the cry of hounds and horns, without the love of generous women, without feats of agility and combat; all the qualities attributed by Patrick and his clerics to their heaven's king, he declares in a bold burst, were possessed by Fionn and the host of the Fianna, and were there a place, above or below, better than heaven it is there Fionn and his heroes would go. Such is a slight and fragmentary illustration of the standpoint of one human-hearted anti-cleric who has retained an epic place in the Gaelic imagination through the ages.

The spirit of Oisín had a hard struggle with Irish clericalism. To put it in another way, the Irish

heart and the joyous Irish social spirit had a life-and-death struggle with types of Irish ecclesiasticism.

In the nineteenth century in rural places it was often acute, though sometimes the heart and spirit gave way in a sort of terrorism before the priest. In his day of dominance he did much to make Irish local life a dreary desert. He waged war on the favourite cross-roads dances—with exceptions here and there—and on other gatherings where young men and women congregated, even in the company of their older relations and friends. Indeed there were cases where the priest, whip in hand, entered private houses and dispersed social parties. The resulting dullness and deadliness of life in rural parishes drove not a few of the young folk to America or Australia. After the Land League there was often a different spirit, and this clerical attitude was resented, and resentment led to resistance, in places. There were always some joyous-hearted priests, and some who had no feeling one way or the other in regard to rural amenities, but, speaking generally, the older priests in the last half of the nineteenth century were no friends of sport or gaiety or social muster, and were often its relentless enemies. They saw moral danger in the most innocent meetings of the young folk of whom they had had the spiritual training and who were part of what they declared in glowing sermons and speeches to be the most virtuous and most spiritual race under the sun. Their notions of woman recalled the fearful and wonderful pronouncements of some of the early Fathers. Love in the main was devilish, a subtle and odious poison designed to set young souls in

the way of eternal perdition. That there could be anything sanctified or spiritual in it of itself never seemed to enter into the consciousness or philosophy of those priests, and sickly and melodramatic were the notions of it that they spread. The bare thought of company-keeping or courtship filled them with horror. After several changes theologians had fixed the number of Deadly Sins as seven; Irish parish priests in practice made courtship an eighth. For lovers to walk the roadside in rural Ireland when the average priest was abroad was a perilous adventure. He challenged engaged couples, on occasions he challenged married people. In our Boyne Valley days there was a piquant instance of the former, but the clergyman who interfered had scarcely the best of it. In such cases, the local story ran, the clergyman in question generally made it a point to seize the young lady's hat before ordering her homeward, and by that period he was reputed to have a pretty stock of such spoils in a room of the presbytery. This latter touch may have had no better foundation than local fancy; while I heard much of his notions and exploits only the one instance of his dramatic interference—with the engaged pair—came to my personal knowledge. But the full tale of the Irish clerical war on lovers would make a big, strange volume of repression and adventure.

Such repression will be stoutly defended to-day, though the sphere of its exercise is necessarily becoming more limited, by a number of the older priests. It arises from, or has been intensified by, their philosophy of human nature and their rigid theology, and argument against it is vain, if not well-nigh



+ “heretical.” (They see in man a miserable worm, and they believe that love of woman makes him not a less but a more miserable worm)—that is to say, love of woman in itself; when they have blessed a union it is another matter. Their sere and short-sighted teaching on the subject of love, or rather their denunciation of it, has done much to blight and mar and materialise humanity in a deal of rural Ireland. It is largely, though not wholly, responsible for the fact that marriages in the Irish farming class—to a goodly extent their own class—are often repellently materialistic, the outcome of “match-making,” which is human buying and selling. In the marriage compact love does not usually enter into the Irish farmer’s calculations. He takes up the question of marrying some woman, often an utter stranger, as a business speculation. There is much negotiation as to the dowry or “fortune” she must bring him, and if an agreement is arrived at regarding this, and if incidentally the lady passes muster, the arrangements for the wedding proceed, and later on the dowry brought by the wife can be used to portion off one of the bridegroom’s sisters and make her acceptable to some strange man in the same way. Or it may be a daughter’s case first; the “principle” and the bargaining are much the same in most cases. Before the marriage takes place a further arrangement has to be made with the priest regarding the fees for the celebration of the ceremony; and this is one of the most disagreeable features of the whole forbidding business. *Irish Nation* contributors tackled these sore scandals, with their economic, moral, and other bearings; and priests were keenly

distressed over their public consideration, but none of them ventured to deny either the facts or the inferences. They only tried to discover the identity of the chief contributor and, in their view, offender, and the present editor of *An Claidheamh Soluis*,<sup>1</sup> the Gaelic League official weekly, then a travelling teacher, felt called upon to write to the press from the west proclaiming that *he* was not the dreadful individual. What the actual culprit had said in part was :—

“At school we were told that matrimony was a sacrament. In parts of rural Ireland to-day marriage has largely lost its spiritual significance, and degenerated into a commercial transaction. Some of the clergy have unfortunately developed the habit of viewing it from the material standpoint. Instances have come under the writer’s notice that would seem incredible. We spent a long time in a country parish out in the diocese of Elphin, and observed many things that caused quite a shock to our town-begotten ideas. Marriage was viewed by the whole countryside much in the same light as trucking with cattle at a fair. The daughter was reserved for the highest bidder, no matter if he was a physical or mental degenerate. The guiding principle resolved itself into, ‘Is it a good match?’

“In the district a very large percentage never saw their present husbands or wives until a few days before the marriage. The parents often make a match on a fair day in the town and reach home with the news, telling the son or daughter they will be married on

<sup>1</sup> Kly'-av or Klee'-av Sul'-ish (the “d” and “m” are “aspirated”). It means the “Sword of Light.”

that day week, and 'a £200 fortune.' The priest who performs the service ascertains the amount of the 'fortune' and charges a high figure. Often he regulates it in ratio to the number of acres or the stock the parties possess. In the case of a poor man, a labourer, the fee was £4; a schoolmaster £10. A bargain was always struck in the 'fortune' matches, and the holy sacrament was often prefaced by such a conversation as 'Do it for £13, Father'—'No, I won't marry you under £16'—'Split the difference, Father,' &c. &c.

"We must examine closely the case of the labourer who, having no patrimony, excepting perhaps a humble cot, contemplates wedded bliss. His chosen is similarly circumstanced—poor, unable to reach the Great West, or she, too, would have followed in the track of her sisters. Her parents' poverty has also been the cause of her remaining without 'the fortune.' How are these two creatures to find the bright coin? The Church will refuse to tie the knot until it is forthcoming."

With incidental differences of detail this Connacht parish picture would stand for scores of other parishes north and south. The only really unusual thing about the article and others lay in the public discussion of the questions, serious ones for Church and nation. Another aspect was put by a Wexford contributor:—

"The transition from tillage land to grass is simple and corresponds with the ageing of the owners. 'Fortune'-hunting is engrafted into the nature of the people, and no farmer's son can marry until he gets a wife who will bring him a 'fortune' sufficient to portion off his own sister. The clergy regard this



as a matter of course, and if a farmer has more than the son who is to succeed him, if two of them do not emigrate or go to the nearest town to serve out beer or soft goods, the three boys and perhaps a sister live along in single 'blessedness.' To divide the farm is impossible; they have no education that would enable them to work it at a profit and set two of them up in farms of their own. They get careless, and setting grass yields a profit, so the land is set. The marriage rate is only kept up to its present low standard by those who can least afford it, and where a marriage amongst people of the farming class takes place it is purely a matter of business with no 'foolish sentiment' attached."

The economic, industrial, and national bearing of these matters the older clergy do not seem to realise or trouble about. As to the moral question, it is enough for them that, though the parties are virtual strangers to each other and there cannot be any pretence of mutual affection, a Church ceremony takes place. They would be shocked at the notion that such a ceremony does not make the union sacramental, whatever the commercial or animal feeling of one or other or both of the parties. Yet that is just what a growing proportion of Irish lay folk is beginning to think. The feeling of repugnance to such marriages and of doubt over the assumption that a Church ceremony rights a wrong, is increasing amongst the younger generation. Catholic theology itself would appear to be on their side. Newman's interpretation, already given, is rather expressive in this connection, in so far as it emphasises the mental attitude rather than the rite.

The Gaelic League was not long in being when woman of various classes and degrees had come out smiling from the social and mental concentration camp in which the clergy would keep her. Ecclesiastics were confronted with grave new problems. With all this the Gaelic League as an organisation had nothing to do, at least directly. Its official business is to preserve and extend Irish as a spoken and written language, and to widen the ways of a modern literature therein. But in the very nature of the case it must have social, psychological, and other effects, some of them exceedingly subtle. The very fact of bringing young people of both sexes together in branch classes, and in social rallies, and at public festivals, means the breaking of new ground.

The sense that they are co-workers in a movement that is broad-based on practical idealism and faith, that demands their best, needing for its success the worthiest individual and co-operative effort, creates, so far as the finer spirits are concerned, a new stir and harmony in the social and psychic atmosphere. In sooth, in hundreds of instances, the Gaelic League has been the means of sweetening the air, creating delightful friendships, and leading to still deeper ties. The enrichment in the way of friendships and fealties that has been wrought by the League has been often commented upon, indeed it is open and palpable to every worker ; while the story of happy and romantic marriages from its ranks would make an extensive volume. In cities and several towns and some country places, the clergy, whatever they thought, have not been powerful enough to interfere with the growth of this new chivalry ; but it has greatly agitated a

number of them, and they have fought hard in places against mixed classes. The struggle has sometimes been stormy. The memorable case of Portarlington, which lasted for years, and became of all-Ireland interest, is described in a separate section. From several points of view it makes a significant chapter of New Ireland history.

Types of the younger priesthood in their casual social hours and conversations treat the conventional clerical attitude to love and womanhood with a certain airiness and piquancy. They seize the opportunity of a jest just as readily as any layman. Once at the Oireachtas amongst the plays produced was *Ar Thaobh an Locha* ("By the Lake-Side"), by Father Thomas O'Kelly, a gifted young priest, who ere he left Maynooth had written an Irish folk-play and translated Mr. W. B. Yeats's *Kathleen Ni Houlahan* into Irish. As the great throng made its way out of the Rotunda, a merry young Connacht priest said to me: "Ba léir gur sagart do sgriobh an cluiche sin. Nuair tháinig an laoch a-bhaile sa deire nior phóg sé a mháthair féin!" (It was easy to see that it was a priest who wrote that play. When the hero came home at the close he did not kiss even his mother!) Father O'Kelly, however, wrote about the same time a strong and moving play of '98, *An Fo'mhar* ("The Harvest"), in which the love interest was dramatic, and still later an Irish drama on the famous story of Deirdre, in which it could not well fail to be so. But at the Oireachtas of 1909 his Irish libretto for Mr. Robert O'Dwyer's opera, *Eithne*—a memorable artistic success—was the occasion of an amusing little crisis about kissing, or the absence thereof. At a late stage



of the romantic happenings, based on an Irish wonder-story, a queen is restored to her king-husband. The artist who played the king maintained during the rehearsals that the young lady who impersonated the queen ought obviously to be kissed for art's sake at the joyous restoration. The coy maiden objected. She pointed out that there was nothing about caressing or kissing in Father O'Kelly's libretto. The artist could not gainsay this, but he thought a young author-cleric would modestly leave such things for the imagination. Any artist would see that on the loved one's return, "after long grief and pain," a mere bow or a hand-shake would make the blood of an Irish audience turn cold. The lady was still obdurate; she had received a convent education, and the artist was a married man. But, he indignantly insisted, that had nothing to do with it; for the nonce, in the world of art, *she* was his wife, his long-lost wife restored to his arms and lips, or at least ought to be. The lady at last agreed to submit the question to a clerical confidant. He decided against the kiss, and that settled the matter. At the public performances the audience felt chilled at the restoration scene. The artist afterwards was much chaffed about what seemed his reserve and coldness at the happy moment. He defended himself with solemnity touched by passion. His disgust with the lady who would not kiss him for art's sake was delightful to witness.

At social gatherings the young priests are often as blithe as the best. They play Irish music and now and then, with twinkling eyes, sing Irish love-songs, the ardent sentiments of which on clerical lips—even though obviously the outcome of a piquant

artistic pose—would be a positive shock to most of their older brethren. They, and indeed some of the senior priests, expand wonderfully in the animating hours after Gaelic festivals, recalling those occasional big-hearted clerics, Franciscans and others, of social and lyrical bent, who were in their element at local bardic musters in the eighteenth century—gatherings whose story and significance make a strange gleam in a dark period of Irish history. Other young priests who are little inclined personally to joyousness—there are very grave and wistful types—admit frankly that the old order of dictation and repression has been against nature, a curse to priests and people. As to woman and her spells, for deliverance from which St. Patrick and so many clerics since have prayed, they are inclined to think that a reasonable exercise of them—if there is reason in such things—would do various Irish people good, especially the farmers.

In other ways the Gaelic League has brought woman into pride of place. On the executive, and in district and branch committees, women are well to the fore. Several of the most brilliant teachers and speakers, and a few of the best writers, of Irish are women. But, indeed, in various interesting and zestful quarters to-day, as in the Abbey Theatre, Cluic'eoiri na h-Eireann (Theatre of Ireland), Inghini na h-Eireann (Daughters of Ireland), the Irish-women's Franchise League, the United Irishwomen (allies of the co-operative movement), &c. &c., there are distinctive Irish women pioneers. Far from satisfactory as it is in a hundred places and ways, the position of Irish women is at any rate im-

proving, inasmuch as several have seized all the possibilities of education to the full, and are spreading progressive and generous social ideas amongst their sisters, and their brothers for that matter. In the older Gaelic Ireland women were doctors, lawyers, litterateurs, art-workers, and more, and had generally a rather enviable intellectual and social position, as Mrs. Fitzgerald ("Maire ni Chinneide"), the author of picturesque Irish plays and a study of Anatole France in Irish, reminded her sisters in an attractive historical review in 1910. Long though the way may be, it looks as if the Irishwoman is coming towards her own again. Curiously enough, save for an occasional leal and chivalrous knight like Mr. Sheehy-Skeffington, or a brilliant apologist like Professor Kettle, pronounced politicians have no more to say for her than the conservative clerics themselves. All the same she has begun a new era.



## CHAPTER VII

### ECCLESIASTICS, EVE, AND LITERATURE

YOUNG priests sometimes gave their lay friends the impression that there was something not only sacrificial but tragic in their lives. Now and then a young cleric would declare that the "Pagans" had practically all the beauty, poetry, and joy of life, but this was probably the expression of a mood rather than a conviction. In the *Irish Peasant* I published this sonnet, which expresses more than a mood, by a young priest:—

#### SACRIFICE

"Unless a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit."

—JOHN xii, 24.

"Mine be the lonely way for evermore

That winds still onward 'neath a grey cold sky,

Life's pleasant places far behind me lie,

The sunshine and the flow'rs and the white shore,

Where youth's sand-castles early toppled o'er

By Time's remorseless tide, fade dreamily

In the great deep of memory,

Good-bye

Sweet days. Welcome, the way that looms before!

And, manhood, wherefore com'st thou thus to me

Claiming the sacrifice of all held dear?

Why must sweet voices ever silent be?

And faces that I loved without a tear

Be turned away? 'Tis but the old decree,

'The seed must die to yield the ripened ear.'

Numerous Irish boys are marked out for the priesthood by their parents from childhood, by way of giving a certain dignity to the family, and without any thought of their capacity or fitness for the calling. They are duly subjected to the training, discipline, and what some would call the hypnotism of the seminary and subsequently the ecclesiastical college. The authorities are satisfied that students who really have no "vocation" for the priesthood will not pass muster with them, but on that there is room for two opinions. Ordination takes place while the candidates are still very young, and there is plenty of possibility of mistaken decisions and consequent tragedy, more or less. But little outward sign of anything of this nature is ever given. Worldliness, or lapses from strict temperance, or the usual or more than the usual intellectual and other faults of ecclesiasticism grown rigid, may be laid to the charge of a proportion of the Irish priests, especially the older ones, but otherwise their personal lives are strictly regulated and often exemplary. Theirs is a sensitive or a severe morality. Of the many things that were illustrated or discussed in *The Plough and the Cross* the two that hurt most deeply, as I learned directly and indirectly, were the scheme of a modernist character for linking Irish Catholics with the Greek Church, and still more the plea of an ex-student of Maynooth for an order of married priests. Many priests, he said, might not desire to marry. "Those who wish to do so should be permitted to marry. Or there could be an Order of married priests, through which the Church would stand to gain immensely, for she would secure a band

of consecrated workers, of high ideals and broad sympathies, who are now scared away by celibacy. In the Greek Church, which is older than our own, the priests can marry once. In our Church the enforcement of clerical celibacy was very gradual, and was strongly opposed for centuries." This, with the rest of the discussion, was keenly resented; the clergymen said that it was no layman's business anyway. Some lay readers declared that personally they strongly objected to the marriage of priests, but not for the reasons that influenced Hildebrand. They said that the wives of P.P.'s and curates interfering in their parochial and personal affairs would render life intolerable.

A very different philosophy to that of the ex-student of Maynooth was expressed by a young priest who figured prominently in the contemporary novel in Irish, also more or less a *roman à clef*, which ran serially a little later in the *Irish Nation*. It removed some of the soreness caused by the revolted student's declaration. The heroine of the story had tried to impress on the hero that marriage, at any rate early marriage, between people who had great and engrossing work to do, one intellectual the other social—in nether Dublin—would be a selfish betrayal of their higher nature, that such unions were the perennial Fall and banishment from Eden. When Kevin, the unconvinced young man, told this and more in kind to his intimate friend, the Father Muiris (or Maurice) of the tale, the latter thought that Una could not be very easily answered. Love, according to sages who had studied its earthly and more transcendental stages might be corporal or carnal, or psychic, or



spiritual. The first, of course, was almost altogether animalistic ; the second was well enough, beautiful in its own way often. He thought that the third kind, an entirely spiritual love, seldom existed between man and woman ; at the best it was rather a mixture of the psychic and the spiritual. Where the love was really spiritual there was no desire for marriage. If, however, in such a case it changed to the psychic, and the persons married, there was a fall from the higher state and nature beyond doubt. Kevin, however, could not quite believe this. Father Muiris proceeded to speak of Erigena's theory of the original spiritual body, its loss through "sin," the coming of the animal nature and sex differentiation. But Kevin had brooded over Eastern intuitions and philosophies, and had a different understanding of mundane beginnings or manifestations. He thought Erigena's explanation great in its way, but incomplete ; also that he was far too hard on woman, who was more 'spiritual than man. As to this the young priest took no side. He was liberal, and eagerly followed philosophers when they dealt with deep and subtle questions, but he was doubtful about the finality of most explanations.

The priest who has by far the most commanding place in the Irish popular imagination is Canon Peter O'Leary, of Castlelyons, Co. Cork, and *his* philosophy of woman in life, and his view of woman as she is often reflected in literature, are somewhat naïve and peculiar. Canon O'Leary suggests a man who came out of an old saga, but after sixty years or more of rural Munster experience, has grown homely and racy without losing anything of the saga spirit, while at

the same time he has acquired a veneer of conservative Irish ecclesiasticism. He does not seem at all the same individuality when he speaks or writes as the old hero, the fireside philosopher or story-teller, and the defender or revealer of clerical interests or preferences. He does all these things with great energy just as the spirit moves him. He is the most popular of our home authors, and appeals to foreign students just as much as to our own; thus Zimmer considered him to be the raciest and most idiomatic writer of modern Irish. He was born sixty-six years ago, when there was still a great deal of culture in rural Munster; Irish, English, and Latin were known in his native parish—schoolmasters of the older style were often keen Latinists. During his whole career as a priest, Father Peter (or “An t Athair Peadar”), as he is familiarly called, has worked hard for the education of the people. At one time he conducted a classical school, and in other parishes he established night schools and reading-rooms, and attended to them regularly himself. He believes, however, that only at the starting of the Gaelic League did he really begin to live in the worthy sense. He liked it because it was democratic, and he is a literary democrat. A ploughman reading *Ceol Sidhe* at the back of a fence during the midday break is more interesting to him than any savant or litterateur. Personally he is one of the cheeriest, brightest, and most humorous of men, while there are surprises and homely turns in his humour. An old woman once asked him the business of the bishop and clergy at diocesan conferences. “Ag imirt chártaí” (playing cards) was the quick answer. He admired a certain

editor whom others did not wholly trust, even apart from his pro-clerical leanings. The editor once advocated views which were inconsistent with his professed principles. The critics were not slow to point out the lapse to his admirer. "If you have a good dog," said Father Peter, "he will give yourself an occasional bite if you're not careful."

Style was born and grew with him; in speaking or writing in Irish he is distinctly and easily a stylist. The subject may be quite homely, but the language is delightfully fresh, direct, and expressive. In the last fifteen years he has published Irish *go léor* through the Gaelic League, the Irish Book Company, the *Leader*, the *Cork Weekly Examiner*, &c., but though we may sometimes question the history, dislike the philosophy, or consider the theology hard or conventional (as in some of his sermons), the force and freshness of the style are unfailing. His peculiar historical sense, as shown in his novel, *Niamh*, and some of his theories about "scepticism," are considered elsewhere (*Clerics as Creators of Folk-Lore*). Here it is to be noted that vivid as the story is in most respects there is no real unfolding of the personality of either of the main women characters. One is pictured in a bold, broad way as very bad, while the other is general perfection under a halo. In fact, we have the conventional clerical view of two types of women; one is going to the Devil, and the other goes into a convent. Of the subtleties or sanctities of either nature there is little understanding or revelation. Womanhood in *An t Athair Peadar's* more popular story, *Séadna*, is certainly more individualised.



Here the author is writing of Irish life as he saw it, and of realms into which old folk and storytellers looked, in his early impressionable years in his native parish. In structure and otherwise *Séadna* is a curious production, but it has something of a whole countryside civilisation. The story is unfolded night after night by a woman at a country fireside, and there are occasional interruptions and comments by her audience. It was begun in a spirit of revolt against Anglo-Irish fiction—not the faithful and penetrative work of writers like Miss Barlow and Mr. Shan Bullock, but earlier varieties, which critics and others had begun to believe were even as Irish life. The central interest is curiously real and unreal in turn. It is in essence a folk-theme, turning on an uncanny bargain with the Devil, and leading to prolonged mental and spiritual crisis. Along with this there is a certain wealth of country character, often graphically sketched, with a world of humour, oddity, and irony. We have, as it were, the clearness, raciness, and humanity of country life and natural town life in some great valley, encompassed by shadowy and uncanny hills, into which and beyond which the hero drifts on occasion. We have racy actuality and folk imagination, with something oddly manufactured not imagined. Between the life and character the book reveals, in its realistic parts, and the Ireland suggested by daily papers and many political speeches, there is about as much connection as there is between Atlantis and the Houses of Parliament at Westminster.

With his stories, dialogues, modernisations of mediæval Irish tales, and other things, Father Peter

is quite a literature to a large democracy. Thousands of people who do not or cannot actually read him themselves listen delightedly while younger folk give them the benefit of his narrative or his shrewd philosophy. He is the favourite fireside author. We used to have a great story-telling and story-loving democracy in the south and west, and much of the north; in later years there has come a change: we have a mingled reading and listening democracy (to which several other writers, like J. J. Doyle, "An Seabhac," &c., also make appeal). In his work for this natural rural realm, particularly in the south—work which, of course, also reaches school and college and other students—Father Peter is unique, an enlivening figure and force to contemplate. When he bursts into controversy, especially in English, he is seldom felicitous, least of all when he tries to uphold a clerical tradition or pretension. One of his greatest literary raids in the last few years was that in 1908 against all English fiction without exception. He asked, "Is the English Language Poisonous?" and decided in the affirmative—which must have been bad news for our bishops—English fiction had absolutely poisoned it. He recalled a country boy's description of what the youth called a "navvil": a boy and a girl to fall in love with each other and somebody to make mischief between them. And then in the innocence of his troubled heart he unloaded much like this upon an alarmed people:—

"Look over the whole range of English fiction. What is it all but that country boy's 'navvil'? No change. No new thought. Not a single new idea.

All the talk we hear about 'plot' and 'art' and 'originality'—save the mark!—is only talk about some new jingle rung on the very same three strings! In order to ring those new jingles, all the lowest and most degrading phases of the lowest and most degrading of human passions are searched for and exhibited to the mind of the reader. Then, and here is the point that answers the above question: the most polished refinement of diction is used for the purpose of covering but not hiding the vilest matter. That refined diction is poisonous language. It is rotten language, as rotten as anything which is corrupt. It is unwholesome. It ruins the mental health of those who read those English 'navvils,' just as rotten food would ruin their bodily health."

I made the obvious remark at the time that Father Peter's English reading must have been peculiarly unfortunate, for his "judgment" of English fiction, whether we took the old or the new writers, was preposterous. True, a good deal of stuff we would not take as a gift in London was thrust under our eyes at the bookstalls in Ireland and solemnly reviewed in the *Freeman's Journal*, but Canon O'Leary, our Irish literary lawgiver, ought to have been more careful in his preferences.

The ensuing discussion was lively and profitable. As in others of its kind we had that sharp clash and candid expression of opinion from which those whose minds were capable of moving were brought to a clearer understanding not only of the issue and things bound up with it but also of themselves. Such intellectual combats also did something to clear away a share of those merely misty or moon-



shiny notions, "spooks" or wraith-like semblances of opinions, that had been passing for truths in hundreds of Irish minds for a long time. We had a little legion of people still who dwelt in a very cloudy cloudland between an idealised Ireland and a phantom England. More and more of them came to learn a little of Irish and English reality, objective and subjective. In the rotten-novel-and-poisoned-language discussion the speech was very frank indeed. It was admitted, of course, that a good deal of the fiction which came from England was trash, and clerics were ironically reprimanded for (on their own showing) their liberal acquaintance with it. But there was other fiction, and their criticism of it was really that criticism of human nature to which they were ever prone. They wanted to take the life-blood out of literature, to destroy its value as a record of human experience and spiritual biography. Whatever it might do in the future literature in the past had dealt with the deeps as well as the heights, the passions as well as the ecstasies of humanity; and the artist was to be judged by his spirit and his art rather than by his subject. Others were told that all "arguments" for the cultivation of Irish based on the alleged corruption of English literature should be addressed only to half-witted audiences. When one disputant, reasonable in other things as he was ardent, asked the question, "Is then the impression true that for the bulk of the English people, or English authors, there is no God—no living, present belief in the Deity?" it was answered that the "impression" might be described as silly. And it was asked in turn if there was always a living

belief in the Deity throughout Ireland ; for if there was, our drink-bill, our slums, our snobbery, our back-biting, our indifference to the burdens of the workers, our unkindness to children, our bargaining over prospective wives in the spirit of cattle dealers, our litigation, our love of usury, our ill-treatment of animals, were more unaccountable than they had seemed before. Of course, while a reference to such ills and social sores was quite fair in the circumstances, and everybody who was not wilfully blind saw the point, there was no suggestion that such things were typical or general. It was a reminder of the fact that we had much to do before we could be called perfect. Were we as perfect as the clergy pretended in show-sermons, or suggested in such discussions as that initiated by Father Peter, we would be wasted "down here." We would be needed as archangels on higher planes of the cosmos.

Father Peter, as invariably happened when people stood up to him boldly, rubbed his hands gleefully, jested with his nearest neighbours, and coolly retired to his study to write racy Irish dialogues on serene subjects of which he was master. So we gained by talking straight to him. And we wound up the discussion with as much charity and philosophy as we could, pointing out to perturbed clerics and battle-thirsty laics that Ireland was once very human ; that she saw life steadily and saw it whole, though not always as deeply as she might ; that then incidentally she created literature : witness her great sagas ; that we were all working in the faith that she would be human and herself again, that she would exercise

her capacities and grow strong in her love of life, her enthusiasm for the Here and the Hereafter. In that stage art and literature worth talking about were sure to come. But the life and the vision must come first. Meanwhile all her well-meaning children and servants might help her destiny by trying to see realities; fools' paradises were almost as bad for nations as pessimists' infernos.

But the conservative clerics and their friends are slow to recognise realities. They talk on occasion as strongly as Canon O'Leary in his controversies, but unlike him they do nothing serious for reform and progress in Irish education and the natural development and cultivation of the Irish mind. Yet they are astonished if neglected or suppressed mind grows weedy and frivolous, or vicious in its quasi-literary preferences. Periodically they become alarmed over the reading-matter of large sections of the people. For some years sermons and the little pietistic productions of the Irish Catholic Truth Society were expected to prevail against it. Of course the hope was vain. The next "remedy" was wilder. In 1911 "Vigilance Committees" were established in several cities, at first ostensibly to deal with English Sunday newspapers, but it soon became evident from the declarations of certain bishops and other ecclesiastics that there was a desire to bar "Socialistic" and general publications unwelcome to the powers that be. It was quickly recognised by thoughtful Irish observers that this outburst of "Vigilance," crude in itself, and in some degree humiliating, would be almost certain to develop, if leaders and their friends had their way, into an intolerable intellectual censor-



ship. It was subjected to candid criticism in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, *An tEireannach*, and the *Irish Review*, the most thoughtful and independent of our later Irish publications.

The tragi-comedy of the Irish conservative clerical attitude to woman and literature, and the efforts to keep both in the way it is imagined in episcopal "palaces" and priests' houses that they ought to go, are beyond telling. The censors strive with a certain sadness in their hearts, for they feel that whatever they do the trouble cannot really be removed, only "regulated" in a haphazard way. Woman cannot be abolished, and literature, which finds her so dangerously interesting, cannot be suppressed. The trouble did not originate in Ireland; it really began with "Eve," on whom Irish ecclesiastics preach with extraordinary feeling and emphasis. If Adam could have sufficed at the morning-time of the manifestation of the world! Had there been no Eve and no womanhood there would probably have been no trouble with literature; nothing in its pages would have shocked a curate or brought a blush to the brow of the most sensitive bishop. Eve is the eternal shadow on the Irish ecclesiastical landscape.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BATTLE OF PORTARLINGTON

THE Portarlington struggle, which began in 1905, gave concern to the whole Gaelic League, including a congress in 1906, and continued in ways for a couple of years afterwards, arose directly from the fact that the local clergy—though friendly to Irish and students of Irish themselves—and the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin along with them, objected to mixed classes, at a period, too, when the classes were dismissed in broad daylight. It was intensified when two of the chief workers protested in church on a certain Sunday against clerical criticism, or, as they maintained, attack, delivered from the pulpit. This is regarded in Ireland as a most sensational proceeding, no matter what the provocation may be. The Gaelic Leaguers also unanimously expelled from the branch the chief clerics with whom they were at issue, the parish priest and a curate.

The two men who protested, P. T. MacGinley and S. B. Roche, were excise officers who had been acting for some time in the district. Earnest Catholics, and willing to go as far as most men in the way of respect for the clergy and deference to ecclesiastical authority in its own place, they had very clear conceptions of the rights of the laity. P. T. MacGinley was, and is still, a member of the executive of the Gaelic League.

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Ten years before he had helped to establish the first branch of the League north of the Boyne—and the second in Ireland—in the city of Belfast, which has now thirteen branches. He is not like anybody else in Ireland. His sturdy, racy, friendly personality is unique. He has loomed large in the modern Irish mind, darkened and depressed the visions of bishops, and made not a little history. So he deserves a word to himself.

He is a teacher, a fighter, a humorist, a seanchai' (story-teller in the Irish sense), a poet, and a politician. He can be as hard as a rock, as gentle as a zephyr; as stern as a soldier in a battle-charge, as merry as a may-boy or a cross-roads dancer. He was born some fifty-five years ago in a little glen among the hills in the heart of Tir-Chonaill or Donegal. The glen was a little world in itself, a wholesome naturalness in its life, the Gaelic gaiety and traditional culture survived, nature and tradition were expressive teachers, though the schools and their teaching were poor enough. All that the little glen meant to Peadar, all that he took away from it, may be left to the discerning reader's imagination. At seventeen he went to Dublin, to the Agricultural School at Glasnevin, where he did not remain long. He passed on to the French College at Blackrock, and eventually entered the Civil Service.

From his childhood he had spoken Irish, and he had grown up in a little world full of the verve and raciness of the Gael. But for a long time he had no opportunity of acquiring a real literary knowledge of the language. A copy of Bedell's Bible, with its small trying type, was in his mother's possession—we owe our Irish translation of the Old Testament to a Pro-



testant bishop (Bedell) and that of the New to a Protestant archbishop (Daniel or O'Domhnaill)<sup>1</sup>—and through this he made an effort, naturally not quite a success, to learn to read Irish. When he got hold of the little books published by the “Society for the Preservation of the Irish Language,” his course was easy enough. He was then in Yorkshire. In 1883 he was back in Ireland—in Letterkenny—and there he edited and published the *Donegal Annual*, which contained a share of Irish. Since the early nineties, when he was attracted to the Gaelic League, he has lived and worked in various quarters—in England, Scotland, and Ireland, but mainly Belfast for the past few years. The Oireachtas competitions brought out his literary talent, and he secured several prizes. He applied the Gouin system to Irish teaching, but the Berlitz became more popular. He published some short Irish plays, rather racy in their character and flavour, and a more ambitious one of historical setting and trend, *Ta na Franncagh ar an Muir* (“The French are on the Sea”). He is known to all Irish readers as “Cu Uladh” (The Hound of Ulster, from the Red Branch saga). His Irish has the directness, incisiveness, and flavour of his individuality and speech. Its northern *blas*, and certain idioms and phrases which before the large latter-day output of Irish printed books had become peculiar to Ulster and almost unknown outside it, give it a pleasant spice and piquancy for southern and western readers. For the *Peasant* and *Irish Nation* he wrote

<sup>1</sup> However, Archbishop MacHale, one of the few great Irish-minded Catholic prelates of the nineteenth century, rendered the Pentateuch into Irish, and Canon O'Leary and Father Dinneen have given us certain Biblical matter in Irish in recent years.

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scores of signed leaders and other articles on politics, books, clerics, festivals, schools, industries—he has been an Irish industrial advocate for nearly forty years—and indeed anything and everything of public interest. Sometimes our clerical and political worthies realise themselves in ways that recall the saying of Laotse about beating a drum while searching for a strayed sheep. MacGinley beats no drum, but he gets the sheep every time.

Through all the Portarlinton furore—while there was comment of one kind or another far and wide, a great deal of passion was stirred locally—he remained cool and determined. Ostensibly, as shown already, the trouble between the Gaelic Leaguers and the clergy arose over the question of mixed classes. Then came a charge, or something strangely like it, from the pulpit, one which was hotly resented. It was suggested by the P.P. that the lady members of the League went to the classes for purposes other than Gaelic, that probably if the town were lighted they would not want to go there at all. According to several witnesses this was the purport of the words, though there was some difference in points of detail. The expulsion of the parish priest from the League branch followed quickly on this. The next step was a condemnation of the Leaguers, by the curate, also from the pulpit, because of the expulsion. There and then Messrs. MacGinley and Roche emphatically but briefly protested, and the curate was subsequently expelled from the League. Eventually after some correspondence between Mr. Roche and himself, Dr. Foley, the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, held an inquiry, after which he severely

commented on the protest in the church and referred very mildly to the provocation that led to it. He also treated rather lightly the charge or suggestion that had brought the trouble to a head, declaring that the P.P. could not mean what the Leaguers assumed he meant, but suggesting that it would have been better had he omitted the clause in question. His judgment in fact was exceedingly disappointing. It left the feeling that in his lordship's view the layman had little right or standing in the Church at all. The serious issues were ignored; on the vexed question of the treatment of worldly controversies from altar or pulpit not a word was said. Dr. Foley took the time-honoured episcopal view of the moral danger of mixed classes, which most of us maintained were, under normal Irish conditions, perfectly natural and healthy, indeed we deemed the association of the young people to be gracious and refining, and sincerely pitied the imagination that saw danger therein.

The war in Portarlington itself was long and devious. The clergy took the platform of the local United Irish League and relieved their feelings on the subject of the sturdy Gaels, one of their designations for MacGinley being that of "lay Pope." The story of all the moves were long to tell. In spite of stress and storm, however, the Gaels went on persistently with their branch and their serious work, they had liberal space for report and reply every week in the *Irish Peasant*, while prominent workers from other parts of Ireland went down and helped them with lectures. Friends of the clergy started a rival branch of the Gaelic League in Bishopswood,



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a townland of the parish, and elected the P.P. as President, but the executive in Dublin refused to affiliate it. The next move was the organisation of what they called a Feis, or public Gaelic League festival, an obvious effort to interfere with the real Feis of MacGinley and his friends. A Feis is the crown and public celebration of a session's serious work, and incidentally it means the acquisition of funds for further work. Then, at the stage when branches everywhere began to prepare for the annual congress of the whole Gaelic League, and Portarlington loomed large in all minds, there came a significant development. The *Irish Peasant* and *Sinn Féin* got hold of copies of a long, printed circular letter which Father O'Leary, the P.P. of Portarlington, had addressed to brother priests. He gave his own story and view of the famous quarrel, and went on to say that the executive of the Gaelic League (which that year by the way, included ten priests) was in obvious sympathy with the opponents of "the bishop and myself," as shown by its action in refusing to recognise the Bishopswood branch and other things. And then:—

"The question now arises, 'Is the executive representative of the Gaelic League of the country?' I am inclined to think that it is not; and this brings me to the motive underlying this letter. The bishops and priests of the country have made the Gaelic League the great power it is now universally acknowledged to be in the land. The present executive has shown by its toleration of, and sympathy with, the Rory O'More [Portarlington] branch, and its refusal to affiliate the other branch formed in this parish,

that it has decided anti-clerical proclivities. I am aware that it counts priests amongst its members, but they are in a small minority, and appear to have little influence on the actions or decisions of the executive. The remedy for this unfortunate state of affairs is to have the objectionable elements removed from the executive, or rendered harmless; and a number of good Catholic laymen, with a fair representation of the priests, placed on the Executive Committee. The priests have it quite in their power to effect this.

“Early in August next, when the Ard-Fheis assembles, the rank and file of the League all over the country will have an opportunity of calling the present executive to account for its actions and of electing another. I would appeal to you to use your influence with the branch or branches of the League in your parish to ensure not only the election of a proper and reliable delegate to the Ard-Fheis, but also his or their attendance at its meetings. The Ard-Fheis this year (1906) will open on the 6th of August. I append for your information the rules regulating the election of delegates to the Ard-Fheis, the conditions on which branches are entitled to representation, &c.—rules taken from the constitution of the League. I am sure you sympathise with my desire to see the government of the Gaelic League—an organisation to which so many of our people look with abounding hope—in the hands of those whose respect for faith and morality cannot be called in question.”

Much in this communication was a neat though unusually unimpassioned expression of the older

clerical attitude. "Faith and morality" and right were at stake, and their gentle clerical defenders showed how the bold, bad lay foemen could be put in their places—of course for their own good and that of the Gaelic League. The declaration that "the bishops and priests of the country have made the Gaelic League the great power it is now universally acknowledged to be in the land" was delightful. Of course, a proportion of the priests, especially young priests, had worked well, and a few bishops had blessed the League in a quiet way, but the lay workers were in an overwhelming majority. Yet in Father O'Leary's view they were nowhere. Why, if the ecclesiastics had done everything, they had not secured more than a small and uninfluential minority on the executive, his reverence did not explain. In point of fact the clerics, as such, had usually more than a fair share of representation amongst the delegates who annually elected the executive. In country places and some towns it sometimes happened that while a branch might contain only one or two clerics to dozens or scores of lay members only the cleric or clerics could find it convenient to spend some days in Dublin in the month of August. Or often a young cleric might be the best Irish speaker, or otherwise the most suitable delegate. So far lay and clerical delegates, judging by results, had chosen in the ballot, from amongst the great number of priests and laymen annually proposed, those whose record and qualifications as Gaelic Leaguers were most marked. If out of the nearly fifty members—officers, residents (in or within twenty miles of Dublin), and non-residents (beyond the twenty-mile limit)—who composed the



executive, which met monthly, they chose some forty laymen, including a Protestant president, and ten priests in a given year, it was for Irish not anti-clerical or clerical reasons. The ten priests differed greatly, but were at one in their Irish predilections. They included Father O'Leary's namesake, now a Canon, the popular author of *Séadna*, &c. ; Father Dinneen, a prolific Irish author, fearful, as we shall see, on the subject of liberal Catholicism ; Father O'Connolly, one of the ablest and most broad-minded of the young priests ; Father Brennan, a strenuous young *sagart*, who wrote of Beranger in Irish, translating several of his songs into the language ; Father Matt Ryan, who had learned Irish at sixty, and wrought something like a revolution in his neighbourhood. And so on.

But at this stage many feared that the situation had changed. The passion aroused through the Portarlington struggle was great, and clerics far and wide, of course believing that the Devil had grown rampant in the land, had done much in their excitement to confuse the issue. Father O'Leary now stood forth, in the imagination of those who thought with him, as a mighty type of the faithful defender of Church and morality, MacGinley and his friends as godless men who carried passion and anti-clericalism even into a sacred edifice and defied priests on the altar. Even a cultured and earnest soul like Father Dinneen, as I learned from Maynooth and otherwise, was woeful at the thought of coming terrors in the way of intellectual and other revolt. What effect would it all have on minds in scattered small towns and quiet country places ? The Gaelic League had

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done healthful, gracious work, and spread a share of thought, but it was young still, and its Catholic majority contained a large proportion of simple, honest spirits who might easily be confused where theological issues were intruded. And Irish or any other clericalism fighting for its own hand does not make just for sweetness and light.

Anyway we felt that it would be a critical if not a sensational Ard-Fheis. We had heard of a countryman who once on a time went in search of "a good Catholic life of Napoleon Bonaparte." The old order of clerics wanted "a good Catholic Gaelic League executive," and in order to get it would "rig" the Ard-Fheis if they could, calling the delicate business, of course, by some sound moral name, and deeming it holy and wholesome. We spread the fact of the clerical appeal to the utmost, and explained the issue as clearly and pointedly as we could, but we had no illusion as to the stiffness of the task and the nature of the odds. We knew what "moral suasion" had meant so far in the Ireland some distance from Dublin.

The issue was knit. Father O'Leary, the P.P. of Portarlinton, and others who felt with him, went forward as candidates for election to the executive. So, of course, did MacGinley and various other tried workers and campaigners. For the forty-five places (15 residents and 30 non-residents) there was a very large number of nominations, but, significantly enough, there was no sign of opposition to Dr. Douglas Hyde and his brother officers. Yet Father O'Leary had been uneasy in his mind about the Gaelic League's Protestant president. A month earlier Dr. Hyde

had returned to Ireland after a strenuous tour in America. From Cork to Dublin, from Dublin to his western home he had been received everywhere with ovations which showed his pride of place in the popular affection and the popular imagination. At Portarlington he spoke a few courteous words from the train to the Gaelic Leaguers. Father O'Leary was hurt when he heard of it. He thought that Dr. Hyde ought to have "corrected" the Leaguers for the protest in the church, and he told a meeting of his friends in Bishopswood that "we won't allow our religion to be insulted by any Douglas Hyde." An insult to—Religion!—and by the man who had rescued the religious songs of Connacht from oblivion! Some days later, on the other hand, the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe at the Clare Feis paid a glowing tribute to Dr. Hyde, as did the Bishop of Achonry, a neighbour, when "An Craoibhin" reached his home in Connacht.

When the trial week arrived, so far as the Oireachtas, the general festival, and its features were concerned, there was no sign of tension or trouble. At the great public rallies in the Rotunda the enthusiasm was as buoyant as ever; pipers, storytellers, dancers, harpers, students, singers, and others, in the day-long competitions, were as zestful as if they had been set to music; amongst the country and oversea visitors was a host of cheery personalities that by this time had become as familiar as the neighbours and friends of youth. I had perforce to work late into nights in the Boyne Valley in order to be able to enjoy the daily luxury of the Oireachtas, but coming up to Dublin in the fresh, sunny morn-



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ings was more than recompense ; it was like passing straight into the heroic and festive Ireland of the old tales. But once the Ard-Fheis began, a couple of days after the opening of the Oireachtas, the thoughts of even the most festive turned anxiously to the Congress hall. There was an imposing rally of delegates, and old campaigners of the League noticed many new faces. This might mean well or ill ; distant branches might have made special efforts to be represented this time, or Father O'Leary's friends might have succeeded in their efforts. Priests did not seem proportionately stronger than at earlier Ard-Fheiseanna which I had seen ; women delegates were, I thought, more numerous.

While there was a decided intensity in the air of the Congress, business began and went on in the old way, but then the election and the really crucial questions were far off. However, the real spirit of the assembly was revealed in due course with dramatic suddenness. MacGinley rose to address the Congress for the first time on a general question. From all parts of the hall he received a spontaneous ovation, extraordinary in its warmth and its fervour, sturdy young priests chiming in with the best, and the ladies excelling themselves. After a few minutes the Ard-Fheis settled down again to business in happy humour with itself. The branches near and far had plainly sent a big majority of men and women whose views were clear and decided. The older clericalism had wrought and hoped in vain. But a more joyous scene was to come on the later day when the chairman rose to announce the results of the ballot for the new executive. These had been awaited with

intense interest, the non-resident or country choice especially; there was less keenness about the other results. When the chairman, looking on the list passed on to him by the scrutineers, said the words "Baill na Tuaithe" (country members, or non-residents), and paused for a moment, the stillness was absolute. Then he read—"Peadar MacFhionn-laoi'," and could proceed no further for a couple of minutes till the joyous demonstration aroused by the fact that MacGinley had headed the poll had subsided. The fearless fighter, the marked man of conservative clericalism, was first and foremost even of the successful! The further reading was broken by various outbursts of enthusiasm as one favourite name or another was heard. And the names that were not heard? For one, Father O'Leary, P.P. of Portarlinton, remained in the ranks of the non-elected. Nor was any avowed friend of his returned. The victory was sheer, decisive.

One of the successful candidates whose name was the occasion of a hearty demonstration was "George A. Birmingham," the Rev. J. O. Hannay, Protestant rector of Westport. He came just above Monsignor O'Hara, a leading Connacht individuality, who had done worthy work for Irish culture and Irish industry in a bleak and impoverished region. The Monsignor was understood to have grown troubled about the rise of "anti-clericalism," and, curiously enough, he resigned his position on the executive almost immediately. Ten priests altogether, all of them proved and popular workers, came again into office. Another Protestant colleague arrived in the person of Mr. Stephen Gwynn, M.P. Seven ladies,

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of marked individuality, secured election. The fact that six primary school teachers were elected added to the sorrows of the older clerics and clerical managers.

The Ard-Fheis dealt calmly and firmly with the Portarlinton troubles so far as they came within its province. One of Father O'Leary's Kildare friends had put down resolutions—regarding the unaffiliated Bishopswood branch, &c.—the passing of which would be virtually a vote of censure on the outgoing executive and MacGinley's branch. One resolution was unanimously rejected, a second was by leave withdrawn. Stringent rules designed against bogus Feiseanna were passed, and the strictly non-sectarian character of the Gaelic League was emphasised anew. Every worker knew already that priest and parson, Protestant, Catholic, and Presbyterian, had the same standing within it, and that it made quite diverse theologians feel entirely comfortable together. The more work they did the more comfortable they felt. But some in high places did not understand, or did not want, this democratic and non-sectarian charm.

The determined stand and struggle of laymen at Portarlinton—the trouble continued locally for a long time—the responsive chords they struck throughout Ireland, their leader's success, and the failure of their opponents, with the Gaelic League as a whole, showed that the new force in the land could teach in more ways than one. "Portarlinton" had become symbolical and historic.



## CHAPTER IX

### THEOLOGY AND WATERWORKS

DURING my editorial term in my native land nothing in the west, or the world for that matter, was so famous in so strange a way as the Claremorris waterworks scheme. Much as I read of it in strenuous days, I remember nothing about it now except its profound theological significance. That supreme fact overshadowed all others, which is doubtless no wonder; ordinary details and technicalities seem irrelevant and intrusive in connection with waterworks of so unique a distinction. At least I think it must be unique.

There are mysteries with which the seers of the ages have warned us not to meddle at our peril. There are psychic realms that we may make our own only after severe and subtle training. Even ordinary-looking bushes and mounds I was solemnly cautioned not to touch, cut, or deface, in my childhood, because of some peculiar connection of theirs with fairyland and the "Good People" or "Gentry"; and the warning added a certain mystery and magical impressiveness to existence. In later years the prohibitions, not so faithfully remembered, concerned theological preserves, fine subtleties of ecclesiastical jurisprudence, and puzzles of Church history. But it might appear that the merest lay mind, the most

ordinary ratepayer unlearned in the difference between St. Peter and Pelagius, would be entirely safe and could not possibly lapse into heresy over a waterworks scheme and the question of the area of charge. Alas, for such easy and temerarious confidence. Walk he ever so warily, the wayfarer on the Irish portion of the physical plane can never be sure of avoiding theological pitfalls.

It was so in the case of the Claremorris waterworks scheme and the vexed question of the area of charge. Mr. Conor O'Kelly, M.P., the county councillor for the division, came to his own conclusion on the problem, and it was not the conclusion of Archdeacon Kilkenney and his clerical brethren. So controversy began, and, as the people say, "one word borrowed another," and ere long the waterworks seemed small in comparison with the words. The stages by which heresy and infidelity developed are obscure, but it was duly declared—the phrase became famous—that some who did not see eye to eye with the ecclesiastics over the waterworks and the area were "hoisting the black banner of irreligion." And apparently when the golden summer of 1908 arrived that evil banner still floated in the breeze. With the summer came the County Council election, and straight and sheer into the fray against Conor of the Banner went the archdeacon and his clerical brethren, righteously determined that Claremorris and heterodoxy should be associated no more in the County Council of Mayo. They found full soon that the host of Conor was more formidable than they had thought, and what was still more embarrassing, as well as fearsomely indicative of the change in Irish

life, the *Mayo News* met them on what they had imagined to be their own ground, boldly declared to them that they were forgetting their real sphere, that they had no business whatever to try to make the issue a religious one. A country paper teaching Churchmen the way they should go! It amazed them, but it nerved them to more epic efforts. It would need an expert to decide whether, in the charging and challenging days that followed, their theology or their oratory was the more wonderful. To give a glimpse of them in their battle ardour I refer to the *Western People*, which took their side, and presumably reported them fairly; it certainly reported them fully. At a Claremorris meeting in support of Mr. O'Kelly's opponent, Mr. Killeen, Archdeacon Kilkenny presided, and declared in the course of his speech, according to the *People*, that "the stainless flag of the Roman garrison still floats on the breeze, while he who would trample it in the dust is driven to his last ditch, and compelled to struggle for his own political existence. The footprints on the sands of time are in this case traced by a fast-receding figure." With the "flag of the Roman garrison" in the breeze, and the "footprints on the sands of time," both the picturesque and the impressive were represented to an extent that is rare in County Council elections. Plainly the archdeacon had no mean sense of style and imaginative magic. But he showed a power of plainer speech. Later on he referred to scenes at Easter "stations"—seasonal religious services held in particular homes in districts where the churches are inconveniently far from many of the people's dwellings. Political addresses had been



given at those "stations," according to the *Mayo News*, and apparently had been rather resented. The arch-deacon's conclusion was that "the friends of the Church need strong arms and brave hearts in those days." And again: "In those days a new Shaun na Soggarth ("Seán na Sagart," a spy on priests in penal times) has arisen, not so bloody as his wretched prototype, but fully as vindictive, and adopting even meaner methods of spying and defamation of the clergymen of his Church." This latter reference was apparently to the pressman responsible for the *Mayo News*' version of the clerical addresses at the "stations" or in churches. The candidate was the next speaker; the *Mayo News* he called "that advocate of hell," and, in reference to Mr. O'Kelly, asked what sort of respect for Archdeacon Kilkenny "could be expected from the godless." The Very Rev. M. J. M'Hugh, P.P., Crossboyne, said—I follow the pro-clerical organ's report in all cases—"we don't belong to a clique of place-hunters or office-traffickers, whose existence depends upon the effusions of an infidel press and unpurchaseable gentlemen of the corner-boy type and character." Also, "Journalism has reached its nadir of infamy and infidelity in calling us a 'vendetta.'" Theologians, strangely enough, appear to have overlooked this aspect of infidelity. Father Tuffy, C.C., urged that "the question at issue is the selection between public decency and morality on the one side and ruffianism, corruption, and religious rancour on the other." The Very Rev. John Fallon, P.P., asked his audience were they prepared "to take advice from that crew"—referring to those in Mr. O'Kelly's brake some distance away. Dr.

T. J. Madden, of Kiltimagh, referred to the *Mayo News* as "a hell-fire's rag." Rev. J. M'Evilly, C.C., insisted that "everything which we hold sacred and holy, and which makes for your own well-being, is at stake."

Here, then, we had priests of Claremorris and the neighbourhood throwing themselves into a County Council contest and giving the people to understand that the issue was a religious one. I have taken one Sunday meeting, the report of which ran to more than eight long columns, as a specimen of how the campaign was conducted, and as an illustration of how certain Irish priests even yet choose to meet an opponent. It is a method which often answered its purpose in the past, but its day is passing. Light and thought are too much for it. What happened in Claremorris? Despite the impassioned clerical appeal Mr. Conor O'Kelly, on the 4th of June, was returned at the head of the poll by a majority of fifty-two. Clericalism in the wrong place waged a characteristic, nay, a record, campaign, and was beaten by Irish Catholic voters. The preposterous suggestion that between the stability of the Church and the result of a Connaught County election there could be any connection, the haughty assumption that the clergy must rule—not simply co-operate—in secular affairs, were repudiated west of the Shannon.

Of course the result, like all such results, was discussed far and wide. Such victories sow seeds of other victories. They bring joy to laics, and not a few clerics, of the new day; they tend to show even the strongest ecclesiastics of the old order that autocracy is growing out of date; they set even the timid thinking.

But though the time is sure to come when such campaigns may be only dim and curious memories, I imagine that the waterworks with the solemn and startling theological significance will be vividly remembered for generations. Far in the unveiled future, when the objective course of the once-famous Fact is over, it will still live on, in subtle, subjective wise, a symbol of the ironies of Irish Church history in the early twentieth century.



## CHAPTER X

### THE FEAR OF LIBERAL CATHOLICISM

IN 1908 we had a curious crisis, which some thought would rend the Gaelic League. The avowed issues, as some of us took care to proclaim with all our might, were not the real ones. Things so far apart as Mr. Birrell's University Bill and liberal Catholicism played singular parts in the fray, and the chief leader against us—for the time—was an able and cultured priest whom we all esteemed for many things, though we could not abide certain aspects of his clericalism which we believed did serious, though of course not conscious, damage. The priest was Father Dinneen, one of our foremost Irish writers, and a remarkable individuality in every way.

He is a man of brilliant scholastic attainments and distinctions. He is an accomplished classical scholar, for one thing, and has the reputation, amongst his old students, of being something of a wizard in the domain of mathematics. He is learned in many lines of literature; perhaps, indeed, his mind is stored with too much literature, not all of it of first-rate quality. Thus it has been said that if every extant edition of Pope's poems were lost or burned he could re-write them all from memory. Notable as is his work, though both his Irish and his English prose is on occasion somewhat rhetorical, it would be more notable, I believe, if he had forgotten half the literature he read or learned and given free

expression to himself and his philosophy of life and intuitions. The general Irish reader first became acquainted with him over a decade ago, when he published the historical novel, *Cormac Ua Conaill*, with its clash and ravage and tragedy. It is a story of the Desmond wars and the closing sixteenth century. It has much of what might be deemed "sensationalism": charred villages, burning woods in Munster, tumultuous character, blood-thirstiness; but it is sensation characteristic of the tragic and sorely-tried Ireland of the time, and a sense of ardour and heroism runs through it. It is lit by the idealism of the youthful hero, and it possesses an appealing flavour of adventure, though there is a certain naïveté, with occasional crudity. At one stage the author dwells glowingly on Cill Airne (Killarney) to whose beauty and whose Irish associations he was afterwards to devote a volume.

Turning from the havoc of sixteenth-century Ireland he gave us a drama on a very modern ordeal, *Creideamh agus Gorta* (Faith, or rather Creed, and Famine). The trial of an Irish mother who might save her starving children, in '47, by changing her religion, or pretending to change it, is the main burden. The picture of the tempters, the "souters," who are represented as hateful hypocrites, has been resented by some, and is possibly overdone, though it follows a popular tradition. The finale is tender and touching. A subsequent play, *An Tobar Draoidheachta* ("The Enchanted Well"), is superior as a dramatic effort. The enchanted well, the fairies, and the rest, are no make-believe in rural Irish-speaking places, though few priests give them philosophical, literary, or any

other recognition. They represent part of the effort to give dramatic embodiment to the wonders beyond our ken ; they typify mysterious realities. In Father Dinneen's play, though the environment is wonderland, nothing happens to the human characters that is not consonant with their natures. The determining forces are the good or evil traits within themselves. In writings like this Father Dinneen seems to forget literature and libraries, to give his own power and inspiration play, and so to achieve truer work. Some of his prose, though it is in its way eloquent, misses this distinction. His work on Irish prose literature is marred, to my mind, by the translation, often literal, of terms and technicalities of French and English and other modern criticism, some of it second-hand or derivative criticism, not to mention catch-phrases. The underlying conceptions could be expressed quite naturally and freshly in his own language ; though sometimes, to be sure, it would demand a little trouble, but with its formative and adaptive resources the language would never fail him.

Father Dinneen has written other Irish plays and descriptive prose works, edited an excellent though incomplete Irish-English dictionary, and rendered Gospel narratives into Irish verse. A splendid side of his work is seen in his editions of Irish poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even though in one or two cases the editing was somewhat hurried and inexact. Apart from their lyrical and literary significance, O'Rahilly, Eoghan Rua O'Sullivan, Sean Clarach MacDomhnaill, the "Maigue Poets," &c., give us vivid light on long periods of Irish social and mental history. Father Dinneen has also



published an Irish life of Eoghan Rua, who in some respects reminds us of Burns. Much of all this poetry was a great popular possession and moving power for generations, and some of it has retained its hold on southern Irish folk to our own day. Father Dinneen's editions, and collections in the same sphere by a few others, brought it forth to wider life and appreciation. Indeed his labour in this line was not so much editing in the ordinary sense as a great national rescue work.

So much for literature, to which, with editorial intervals, Father Dinneen has devoted his main energies since his retirement from active service with the Jesuits. He is a very composite individuality, and, like many great men, has what ordinary vision regards as peculiarities. We might liken him to the mountain stream : now radiant in its gleam, now unaccountable in its course, at times eddying vehemently round obstacles, anon noble in its volume and its force. He has intense convictions, and a host of minor opinions that seem incidental and unimportant, but for which he is prepared to do battle with fiery ardour. He is a perfervid champion of ecclesiasticism, and sees enmity and danger to the Church in the straight and strong assertion of the rights of laymen. He has long been troubled on the score of liberal Catholicism in Ireland. I used to remind him that real Catholicism was always understood to be liberal, but he would not answer ; he credited me with a constant desire to provoke him into controversy. He did not much care for the association of Protestants and Catholics in the Gaelic League ; at one stage he suggested in a

magazine published by the Dominicans, that it might be necessary to establish a strictly Catholic Gaelic League. The Portarlington developments alarmed him; the temper of the Ard-Fheis of 1906 distressed him. While on the Coisde Gnotha, the executive of the League, he seldom saw eye to eye with his colleagues, including priests, on any question of clerical bearing. Thus in 1907, when the bishops, acting as trustees of Maynooth, did something that looked like lowering the status of Irish in the College, and great disaffection arose amongst students, and the executive quite frankly but politely expressed its own feelings in a long correspondence with the president, Father Dinneen saw dictation, disrespect, and other things in various stages of the procedure. At a decisive point he found himself in a minority of one, all his brother priests and the laymen being quite unanimous. I saw for some time that his intense pro-clericalism and his public hints—as at the leading Dublin branch of which he was president—of things wrong and dangerous in the League would lead to trouble, and that his deservedly great influence owing to fine work done would make it difficult to meet him. The fact that his fears were at once wild and sincere made the position all the more awkward.

The trouble came with a vengeance in May 1908. Father Dinneen published a severe criticism of the executive in a letter in the *Freeman's Journal*, and declared that he was resigning his membership, though as a matter of fact he did not resign. Put briefly his charges were that the serious interests of the Irish language were being neglected, and ground

lost in several ways—quite strange statements—while the executive was trimming its sails in accordance with the wishes of a Castle Department. This from a popular member of the executive itself was startling. The “Castle” was the unkindest cut of all. Dublin Castle is not exactly popular with anybody in Ireland, but to hundreds of thousands it stands for all that is most gloomily anti-Irish and repressive; even sympathetic Chief Secretaries are supposed to be hard set to do anything humanising with it. The most cruel and damaging thing that can be said about a bishop is that he is a “Castle bishop,” and it is sometimes true, though we are expected to veil the fact discreetly; but on this as other things even very young Ireland has opinions of its own. I and a friend had our eyes opened in this regard some time ago by the manuscript book of an Irish youth of thirteen. One of his original sketches described the coming down to contemporary Ireland of St. Michael the Archangel, with an immense Bible under his arm. On arriving in Dublin he was asked the purpose of this huge Bible. “To soften the swelled heads of Castle bishops,” was the startling answer of the Archangel.

What Father Dinneen really meant was that the education committee, with the knowledge of the executive, had had business communications with the Irish Education Office, the National Board, as it is called, which controls Irish primary education generally, while the clerical managers control the teachers particularly. It is not a Castle Department, indeed it is not easy to say exactly what it is. Parliament appears to have no more control over



it than Ireland has. The Treasury has a certain power so far as funds go, and the members of the Board, or Commissioners, hold their posts at the pleasure of the Lord Lieutenant, which means in practice that they go their own sweet way. Several of them have had no particular experience or qualifications in regard to education questions. A judge or a coal merchant is expected to do quite well as a commissioner or director of Irish primary education. Very often he knows nothing of Irish educational requirements outside Dublin, and does not believe that the people can know either. It is a singular system altogether, and it needs almost constant agitation or criticism to bring it nearly into line with growing needs and broadening ideals. Indeed one of the most remarkable facts of the Ireland of the last fifteen years or more is the widening and deepening popular interest in education of different kinds, and the difficulty of making the popular will effective. Even yet agricultural science, though supremely important to Ireland, has only a paltry place in Irish education, much of which is a sapless, characterless thing, calculated to turn out clerks and sundry entities for export rather than trained home workers and virile citizens in the broad sense. The intermediate system, with its unrepresentative and largely hostile directors and its vicious cramming, is even worse than the primary. The Gaelic League, a popular Education Department amongst other things, has had long and hard battling with both, especially with the Primary or National Board, which has been moved steadily if sometimes slowly, the Resident Commissioner, Dr. Starkie, one of whose enthusiasms

is Aristophanes, proving generally sympathetic and anxious to help progressive efforts.

At the time of Father Dinneen's declaration of war the communications in progress concerned the question of fees for Irish, on which some of Father Dinneen's friends had peculiar notions not shared by the executive, while teachers themselves were somewhat divided on the matter. Where Irish was taught as an "extra," or outside the technical school "day," or where extern teachers of Irish were employed, it was right, of course, that fees should be paid; where the language was taught by the regular teacher as part of his ordinary day's work it was not right, though Father Dinneen's friends maintained the contrary, that fees or any special payment should be given for Irish—in that event the teacher would really get double payment for Irish. In regard to bi-lingual schools, where Irish and English were teaching media, there was no controversy so far as I remember. At this stage the situation was further complicated by questions relating to the Irish University Bill, though the really memorable struggle in which practically the whole nation was concerned—on other issues—did not come till somewhat later. At this time Father Dinneen's coadjutors and followers made the strange discovery that the Gaelic League executive was not sufficiently thorough-going in regard to the position of Irish in the coming University, and they and *Sinn Fein*, the official organ of the most advanced political party, made the truly astonishing claim that clauses making Irish essential at matriculation, and so on, should be embodied in the Bill before it left Westminster. Obviously this

was impossible, or in the highest degree unlikely; anyway it was not the business of Westminster. Making Irish or anything else essential was something to be done in Ireland by the Board of Studies and Senate if Ireland wanted it to be done. Anyhow, what with the "Castle" charges, the criticism of the executive for other alleged delinquencies, the Irish "fees" confusion, and the University crux, the position became strained and exciting, especially as Father Dinneen and certain of his friends could be very powerful and impassioned controversialists when really aroused, while *Sinn Féin* when moved had remarkable vigour and a certain unlucky genius for confusing plain issues. The enemies, especially ecclesiastical enemies, of the Gaelic League were gleeful; and it is always to be remembered that in such cases when we say "Gaelic League" we mean several things besides a mere organisation: we mean native culture; national ideas above class, creed, or party; frank and friendly association of Catholics and Protestants, men and women, in Irish and humanising work; no clerical leading-strings, no interference from Rome or Armagh; high and genial comradeship and ardour; democracy in the right sense; and much more. I saw from the outset that several of our friends were in danger of being turned from the realisation of the things really at stake; and indeed matters grew so troublesome that a special Ard-Fheis or Congress of the Gaelic League was asked for and summoned. So the *Peasant* set itself to carry the war into Africa. On the publication of Father Dinneen's onslaught it reminded him that talking about Castle Departments was easy and had



an exciting effect upon the popular mind; but it was not the Castle that was responsible for English sermons and English teaching in so many Irish-speaking districts. What of his friends, the Church and school authorities, in much of the Gaoltacht? Father Dinneen, it was further said, was broad-minded and progressive in certain respects, but he had a curious dread of an educated and active laity astonishing in a cultured man; at heart his deepest fear about the Gaelic League was not that it would come to terms with the Castle, but that it would grow too independent. And in a long leading article we came to the vital question. It will be as well in this chapter to quote typical points as they were put in the full stress of the fray:—

“Does the general Gaelic Leaguer desire to see the organisation wrecked? There are certain people—one of whom we believe to be Father Dinneen: we are open to contradiction from him—who consider that the break-up of the organisation would do certain good and no harm. Their theory is that Irish language and kindred study would now go ahead without any organisation, so the main purpose of the movement would be achieved; while they believe, on the other hand, that the development of a powerful and independent body like the League, *in which all creeds and classes can join for national and intellectual ends*, is dangerous. The growth of the League on non-denominational, national, and independent lines has occasioned considerable alarm and jealousy, and for the past two years very subtle efforts have been made to hamper or ‘control’ it. The question now is: Is it to be crippled or wrecked? . . . Some

[clergymen in recent years] disliked the idea of the laity doing their own business, some the friendly union of Catholics and Protestants, others, amongst whom was Father Dinneen, were gravely troubled about what they vaguely described as the rise of liberal Catholicism, which might mean after all the very orthodox Catholicism of Newman, or Lacordaire, or 'J. K. L.' [Bishop Doyle], or the author of *The Tradition of Scripture* [Canon William Barry]. . . . In the circumstances the position of Dr. Hyde, of whom Father Dinneen and his friends have shown a curious jealousy, is an awkward one. He is a Protestant, and, for fear of being misunderstood, dislikes to say much on a sore question in a susceptible land. It is the bounden duty of Catholic Gaelic Leaguers to be firm in this matter; if they shirk the duty now the evil consequences will be great. . . ."

By the following week the situation had become more exciting. Father Dinneen and his friends had grown more active and more militant. In public they evaded the religious question and its bearings. We kept it right to the front:—

"There are good workers, even if some of them are rather hot-headed or oblique-minded, on the side of Father Dinneen, who of course is a notable, if uncertain, personality himself. . . . But they do not understand his guiding and driving ideas; his fear of liberal Catholicism (whatever on earth it really is), his dread of a non-denominational and national Connradh, his desire for an exclusively Catholic Gaelic League. It is only the extreme and hostile sections of the clergy, and those who misunderstand the Gaelic League, who sympathise with those wayward notions. . . . As we said before, and cannot say too often, they are jealous

of the growth of a powerful and independent organisation which joins all creeds in national work, but scrupulously avoids interference with the sacred concerns of any creed or any conscience.

“Dr. Hyde is an obstacle in their way, and a safeguard of the Gaelic League. Apart from his great popularity and distinction, he keeps the League steadfastly to its high national purpose, when he is in health and at the helm. He would be a bold man who would say that Dr. Hyde, who is a felicitous embodiment of Gaelic League ideas, interferes with any one’s faith, or meddles in any one’s politics. He is tolerance personified. . . .

“Of the present developments of the campaign—the sincere but mistaken campaign—of An t Athair Padraig and his friends, there are indeed different explanations by those behind the scenes, though all agree that whatever the explanation, or the mixture of explanations, the campaigners have no love for Dr. Hyde. Whether Father Dinneen honestly and seriously desires the ending of the Gaelic League as a non-denominational organisation or—in the other view—desires himself to lead it and give it a denominational trend, is, however, a matter of no great moment, for, as we strongly believe, neither idea can be carried into effect. The Gaelic League as a common, cordial, enlivening haunt of peace, study, enthusiasm, and *camaraderie*, is too precious to too many people to allow them to let its maintenance on its present lines be jeopardised. In the interest of the language, the nation, and religion itself we want fraternal co-operation, not a series of denominational concentration camps.”

The article, a very long one, that spoke for others



in the inner councils of the Gaelic League as well as the writer, was entitled "Is Dr. Douglas Hyde to be Superseded?" It stressed the very points that Father Dinneen and his pro-clerical friends were least anxious to meet. Some declared that too much was made of their feeling about Dr. Hyde. The suggestion of hostility to him, to say nothing of possible deposition, had an immediate effect in the country. It stirred the young Catholic laity to a marked degree. The notion of making the Gaelic League denominational was widely discussed, only to be repudiated. We began to hear much of these two things, and less about the Castle, the fees, and the University. At a special meeting of the executive the members, lay and clerical, repudiated Father Dinneen's charges. He in a long speech at the Keating branch of the Gaelic League, of which he was president, a speech carefully reported in the *Freeman*, went eloquently over the old ground, but omitted all reference to the challenge about denominationalism. We kept it to the front all the time. Some supporters expressed the fear that the *Peasant* went too far, that the thorough-going declaration against sectarianism in the League in any circumstances would be resented by the conservative clerics, misunderstood in country places, and productive of passions and forces too strong for us. The special Ard-Fheis drew nigh amidst excitement and intensity now curious to recall.

This special Ard-Fheis, held in Dublin in June 1908, was a surprise if not to friends at least to foes. It came at a critical juncture, after a good deal of passion, and in a long sitting it reviewed all the issues with earnestness, good temper, and a fine sense

of responsibility and dignity. It was a notable muster numerically; it was heartening in its good feeling, and thoroughly effective in the way it grappled with the work. The fees question was settled, in a manner that pleased all parties, on the proposal, a rather ingenious one, of a popular primary teacher, Padraig O'Shea ("Gruagach an Tobair"), the author of racy Irish country sketches. The University question was discussed in all its bearings, the executive view accepted, and light and leading given of a kind which proved useful to town and country delegates in the campaign that was to be. Father Dinneen did not attend at all. The Congress cleared the air, stilled controversy, and left a heightened feeling of cohesion and comradeship. The fears and fancies of the preceding months seemed amusing illusions at the close. Conservative clerical hopes were dashed once more.

Father Dinneen did not appear again in the inner councils of the Gaelic League. We were genuinely sorry for the anxiety and unrest he had caused himself through his strange and frustrated foray. It might have done grievous harm, but in reality it only tended to show in striking fashion what new lessons had been learned and taken to heart by comrade Catholic and Protestant workers. Such being the case all could feel kindly towards Father Dinneen. Even in the hottest stage of the fray we were never likely to forget his serious constructive work—his original Irish prose and the singers of dark days he had brought into light anew.

In connection with all such gatherings there are pleasant incidental ironies and comedies. At this

Congress Dr. Hyde made his first appearance in Dublin after a long and serious illness. During the illness shaving was not to be thought of, and so he faced his host of friends adorned with a right noble beard. In the next issue of the *Peasant* I gave in Irish an imaginary congress conversation between a young priest and an old priest. The young priest was represented as saying sadly that they were all lost at long last, that Dr. Hyde himself had gone over to the anti-clerics. When the old priest wonderingly demanded an explanation, his young comrade said the thing was obvious. No cleric wore a beard; no friend of the clergy wore a beard; hitherto Dr. Hyde had never worn a beard; but now he had immeasurably more of a beard than even a notorious anti-clerical editor himself; the beard was the sign and symbol of his anti-clericalism. By this time the older priest saw the joke, such as it was. I had forgotten this trifling when, some days later, at a Dublin gathering, Dr. Hyde appeared on the scene, quite clean-shaven and suffering from something of a cold. A lady friend commented with surprise and regret on the disappearance of his beard. He answered laughingly that he had been obliged to shave off the beard and risk a bad cold after what I in my wickedness had published. We all laughed, and of course treated the matter as a joke, but really it might have had a serious basis; it was like what the kindly, conciliatory, diplomatic Dr. Hyde would feel bound to do in a land of sensitive clerics. Anyway anti-clericalism has been seen on occasion in things just as innocent as beards.



## CHAPTER XI

### PEOPLE V. BISHOPS

THE problem of a Catholic University for Ireland had long troubled the minds of Irish bishops, and to a less extent, and intermittently, of English ministers. As prospects grow brighter in the twentieth century the bishops, to their great concern, heard the Catholic laity talk less of a Catholic University, and more of a National University to which Catholics could go; finally the talk was mostly of a National University pure and simple. When Mr. Birrell's measure approached its final stages the burning question with young Ireland was the possibility of nationalising the coming institution from the start; it was the national aspect that was stressed in all discussions. One prelate, bolder of speech than his brethren, roundly characterised all this in private as "audacity." Bishops had stood out and struggled for a Catholic University, and here were those clamorous lay folk insisting on making it a National University. Still more significantly, a virile democratic note had begun to ring in the land. It was declared again and again that the way of talented children of the people must be smoothed right up to the University, that the primary teachers must in future have their share of University culture and advantages, whether through the "linking-up" of their training colleges with the institution, or by other suitable means. Much was said about

the crying need of training bright and earnest young students who would give their hearts and minds to Ireland, while there was a liberal share of plain speaking against the notion of merely providing for the higher education of "Catholic snobs." Indeed in a dramatic hour at a later stage, when the bishops had roused a national passion that astonished them, a big-hearted priest exclaimed, at a meeting of the executive of the Gaelic League: "We must have this University for the Irish-minded, and let the Catholic snobs go to Hell." "But surely, Father," said a lady member, when the laughter had subsided, "it is rather *your* business to keep people, even snobs, out of Hell." Others of us thought that if Hell were to be kept as a going concern, somebody must go there, and Ireland's contribution might well be snobs; any way, to have ecclesiastical sanction for the notion was helpful.

In June 1908, no sooner had the Gaelic League Congress declared in effect that it would not be bullied into a campaign in the dark against the new University scheme than episcopal and clerical leaders came forth in quick succession to protest against it, and not for real or alleged educational deficiencies either, but because it did not give ecclesiastics *ex-officio* powers incompatible with the spirit of democracy. Such in brief was the meaning of complaining pronouncements by Dr. O'Dwyer, the Bishop of Limerick, the Catholic clerical managers, and lastly Cardinal Logue. They did not adopt at any point the national educational policy, or the expectant but critical attitude of the Gaelic League. They said nothing about Irish ideas, or industrial and scientific

education for the children of the people ; in fact they expressed no educational ideal or enthusiasm at all. They did not appear, as we reminded them at the time, either to trust the people or to consider the people. The Cardinal, in a speech at Cork, described the so-called "exclusion" of clergymen from the governing bodies of the new institution as "persecution"; but, as we also reminded him, he had nothing to say of the gross injustice of the very real and deliberate exclusion of the Catholic laity from any share in the control of the primary schools of the country. I said in the *Peasant* that Ireland was tired of these episcopal doubts and lamentations; it was the old, weary story: debating timorously as to what education might do or undo, and the number of restrictions and leading-strings that must be adopted, instead of bravely securing education for a distracted and drooping nation, and gallantly trusting native intelligence and human nature. Ireland, like the progressive parts of the world, would soon or late grow impatient with, or indifferent to, that order of argument, feeling that it did not touch the compelling modern problems of mind and life at all.

Much of Ireland in point of fact had already grown impatient with it. The episcopal complaints fell on wholly unsympathetic ears. The popular disposition, clearly shown, was to take the University machinery and make it as Irish and as serviceable as possible. The prelates saw plainly that they must take new ground. The plain speaking of the *Peasant* evidently hurt the Cardinal. Within a fortnight he went down to Kilkenny on the eve of a Feis. He pointedly ignored the Feis, which



proved, however, an unprecedented success, but delivered on the evening of his arrival an extraordinary address on anti-clericalism in the Gaelic League. The irony of it was that the League officially was notably and palpably conciliatory towards clerics—far too much so for many of the rank and file. It never began a quarrel, and was not quick even to take up challenges. The Cardinal spoke of a clique “who seem to have been touched, and touched deeply, with the mania that has nearly ruined education in France, and who, in consequence, wish, like their Nonconformist friends in England, to keep the priests out of the schools.” To this I answered that we were not aware of any clique in the Gaelic League or elsewhere that desired to keep the priests out of the schools, though some priests appeared to be rather slow to enter them or take any active interest therein. The real criticism was twofold: that many clergymen did not attend more thoroughly to religious education, and that the laity had no part whatever in the vital business of directing secular education. But what was “the mania that had nearly ruined education in France”? Surely we were not all densely ignorant of modern French history. The clergy had had plenty of control in French education, and what was the result? The ecclesiastical institutions turned out very indifferently educated Catholics. The Cardinal’s next point, or threat, was that the day the “anti-clericals” succeeded in making the Gaelic League “an instrument to turn any section of the people of Ireland against the priesthood of Ireland would see the end of the Gaelic League.” I reminded him of Archbishop

MacHale's declaration that if the Irish people ever turned against the priesthood it would not be the fault of the people. Also that his Eminence might consider the other side of the picture : sections of the priesthood turned against the people and against nationality, just as sections of the French priesthood had been turned against the French Republic, with disastrous consequences not for the Republic but for the priesthood. In modern times, I added, it was hopeless for priesthood, or episcopacy, or the Propaganda, or the Papacy itself, to attempt a successful war against nationality, and it was no part of the mission of one or all of them to try it. The Cardinal also tried to point a menacing moral by recalling what had happened when Protestant versions of the Bible were first extensively circulated in Irish-speaking districts. To escape the Bibles the people were encouraged by the clergy to let the Irish language die ! I said it might be imagined that nobody would be prepared at this time of day to refer with any feeling save sorrow and humiliation to that fatuous proceeding.

"His Eminence raised shadowy issues. There are plenty of real ones, social and intellectual, in Ireland, and it is a pity that these are not the ones which leading Churchmen will tackle when they address the masses. In our cities and shrunken towns and waste country places anti-clericalism may well seem a shadow, but anti-humanity a bitter and oppressive reality. Life, labour, mind, and soul are cheap and largely helpless in Ireland, and all the work of the Gaelic League so far is no more than a little breath and a little balm to a wasting body and a distracted imagination. Standing critically

apart and discoursing of anti-clericalism seems sadly unreal. A passionate pity and brave constructive work are what we might well expect from all our leaders, intellectual and spiritual."

Contributors in Kilkenny itself wrote very frankly indeed about the Cardinal's action, but the rally and enthusiasm at the Feis on the day succeeding his address made the most pointed answer of all. There were sundry signs of growing restiveness. The prevalent tendency of high ecclesiastics to make deference or even servility to the clergy rather than life and conduct and achievement the test of Catholicity was patiently endured no longer. Even less than the majority of his episcopal brethren did the Cardinal understand the Ireland that was in the way of coming to herself. He was aged and isolated, he had practically no serious advisers, there was a gulf between him and the more progressive and enlightened of the clergy. His personally kindly and homely traits ensured for him a mild popularity, but his national spirit was considered lukewarm, he did not understand the idea of an Ireland with a passion for minding her own business and developing her own innate resources rather than begging and preaching abroad, so the University idealists bewildered him as much as the "anti-clerics" alarmed him.

But the "anti-clerics" were undaunted, and the exposition of the true University ideal in the new circumstances was carried on with power and persistence. The whole question turned on the initial necessity of making Irish essential or obligatory at matriculation in the new University. Some who were quite friendly to the language and its interests



were at first of opinion that this would be a matter of serious difficulty or hardship, and they disliked what they considered to be "compulsion." This will probably seem a reasonable and practical view to a number of non-Irish readers, and they may wonder why the masses of the people came to take an entirely different view. Why not leave Irish optional? Let us see the view of the Irish-minded majority, leaders and followers. War, legislative and otherwise, had been waged for generations against the Irish language, as against Irish religion, Irish industry and commerce, and the immemorial Irish land system. The latter was destroyed long ago, the industry and commerce were killed or crippled. In regard to the religion, England came to terms with the official Catholic authorities in Ireland, and the official Church thereafter, an occasional figure like Archbishop MacHale excepted, was a powerful force against the already losing language, whose misfortunes were further augmented by the Great Famine. Steadily through nearly all the latter half of the nineteenth century Irish ideas and culture receded and grew dimmer. The Gael might say with the Old Woman of Beara:—

"Ebb-tide to me!

For with the ebbing sea my life flows out.

Old age has caught and compassed me about.

I mourn the glad days passed away from me."

But if the tide ebbed it also turned. It had been returning since at least the mid-nineties. Apart from the positive results and achievements there had come a new feeling as to the place of Irish in our educational systems; there had been a long struggle

to Irishise the primary and secondary schools, where the people as yet had no direct control. When the new University came, or before it came, it was emphatically declared that it must be brought as far as possible into harmony with Irish ideals and requirements. Certain things, like Latin, French, physics, mathematics, are essential or obligatory at entrance to a western University; in an Irish University, the Irish language, &c., must be part of the basis and scheme. When it was objected that this might mean favour or preference in regard to Irish as yet the answer was: No, it means conformity with our national and educational ideal; even were it preference—well, we've had generations of enactment and compulsion *against* Irish, now it is time to undo a little of the evil. When it was further objected that the secondary colleges and other institutions had not had time to come into line with the new order, the reply was that several of their conductors had not availed themselves of their opportunities, and would never do so if left to themselves. They were against the people and against Irish ideas; and the seminaries under the bishops were amongst the worst. Making Irish essential in the University at once or with a time-limit would necessarily have the immediate effect of bringing into line those schools and colleges in whose management the people or the nation had no voice. Another great point insisted on was this. To make Irish one of the essential subjects would be a helpful democratic move, an aid to the "poor man's son," who had at his door the opportunity of securing a first-rate training in Irish. This is only a slight summary of the reasons—patriotic, tactical, and

practical—in favour of essential Irish in the University that had begun to ring through the land. Many declined to give “reasons” at all. People, they suggested, are not expected to give “reasons” for sanity or the Ten Commandments, and “reasons” for Irish in Ireland were equally uncalled for. We gave all sides a hearing in the *Peasant*, but after a little while the friendly doubters and pessimists were swept into the main current. At an early stage a learned and thoughtful contributor, who soon changed her mind, expressed her dislike of what she believed to be “compulsion,” though apparently the “compulsion” in regard to Latin, physics, &c., did not strike her. One of the most eminent of the Irish-minded ecclesiastics, himself a practical educationist, contributed a trenchant rejoinder, in the course of which he said :—

“Would it not be well for all of us to call to mind every morning for some time to come, great a bore as it may be, that for better or worse we are living in Ireland; that most of us shall have to be content to remain in Ireland; that in Ireland all grades of education ought to be Irish; and that whilst the national language is in a subordinate position, and not an essential part of all our educational systems, education in this land, for all our make-believe, never will or can be Irish? We may find it troublesome to look this truth in the face, and act accordingly. But we cannot get rid of it by striving to ignore it. Nor is it manly or patriotic to seek to do so. We must be prepared to suffer the inconvenience entailed by our past follies. Making sorry faces, and bewailing the fatuity of those who have



gone before us, will not help us to redeem the past. To restore the national language to its rightful place needs drastic measures. Let us nerve ourselves to adopt them, now that circumstances have become fairly promising; or otherwise let us understand once for all that we are content to see the national language kept permanently out of its own. We are not going to restore it unless we decide to make it a necessary part of education in all grades, and, as soon as may be, the common vehicle of education. And in education we all know that all real reform must proceed from above downwards. Hence we must begin with the University. . . .

“When Ireland was almost wholly Irish-speaking English was made the language of the national schools. That, too, created difficulties, yet the voice of protest was scarcely heard in the land. [Apart from Archbishop MacHale.] Still earlier, when Maynooth was established, to make English, which few understood, obligatory, and to make Irish, which almost every one knew, voluntary for the most part, must have entailed very great difficulties, but difficulties are invariably made light of except where there is question of Irish.”

At the beginning of December matters became more interesting and exciting. One of the best-known Jesuits in Ireland took the field against the popular ideal. This was the Rev. Dr. Delaney, S.J., noted in his own way and sphere as an educationist. He was the chief personality of what was called University College (Dublin), whose place before the new University scheme came into operation was rather prominent. He had been nominated a senator of

the National University. At one of the College functions he protested strongly, in a peculiar speech, against the idea of making Irish essential in the new institution. His points roused considerable anger and scorn. He dwelt on imaginary imperfections of Irish, and the equally imaginary "imperfect means" of imparting a knowledge of it. I urged at the time that there was no use in getting cross about these things. They seemed quaint to the well-informed, but they suggested also how divided and segregated we were still in Ireland. In a normal country the average man would know all about the facts, and they would be absolute commonplaces to an eminent educationist. But in Ireland we had been living in a set of concentration camps; national knowledge was not a common possession and enthusiasm; while currents of ideas travelled erratically and partially.

There was a mingled comedy and pathos in some of the propositions that Dr. Delaney adopted. One came to this: Irish was to be kept down in the University in order to make the University a light to the world and attract the children of Irish emigrants home to it. I pleaded in all humility that it was time for us to bend our best energies to saving and energising the remnant of a nation we had left, and to let the world try to get on without us for a while. It had been doing a lot without us, and somehow we, for all our boasting and moonshine, did not seem to count for much, artistically or intellectually, anywhere. Ireland could not be of interest or value to the world if she were not productive and progressive in and for herself. The ambitious Jesuit

was also urged to ponder on the great saying about gaining the whole world and losing one's own soul. It applied after a fashion to nations, too; only, so far as Ireland was concerned, while she had been losing her own soul she had not been gaining the world. She had been making a foolish bargain.

Dr. Delaney's speech was one of some sharp reminders to the country that a considerable proportion of the nominated Senate of the University was either hostile or indifferent to the Irish ideal in education. Straightway began the hardest fight ever fought in Ireland for an educational issue. It was opened with a congested meeting in the Rotunda, Dublin, at which Dr. Douglas Hyde was supported by popular priests like Father Matt Ryan (Munster) and Father O'Kieran (Ulster), and at which was read a letter from the Rev. Dr. O'Hickey, the Professor of Irish in Maynooth, containing the most trenchant language yet heard from an ecclesiastic. Cablegrams from the Rev. Dr. Yorke of San Francisco and from the president of the A.O.H. in the United States testified to the spirit of Irish-America, while the telegrams and letters from far and near in Ireland were agreeably unconventional and pointed. The clerical speakers were sharply and severely critical of things that long had cried for criticism. Father O'Kieran frankly said that in the educational order Irish Catholics had been following blind guides, as well as men who sold their birthright—both at the founding of Maynooth and the so-called "National Education" system—not for a mess of pottage but in the hope of a mess of pottage which they never got. Dr. O'Hickey, a massive personality in every way, a



sheer contrast physically and intellectually to his predecessor, Father O'Growney, was scathing in his strictures on the "Catholic snobocracy" and the "West-British Catholic faction" that wanted to lay down the educational and other law for Catholic Ireland as a whole. He handled the Jesuit, Dr. Delaney, with what some considered great severity. But this was generally welcome, as feeling had been rapidly rising on the subject of the Jesuits and their reported work behind the scenes. We gathered that in Dublin and outside it some among them had been canvassing and endeavouring to mould opinion to Dr. Delaney's view on the question of Irish in the University, also that this was part of a large and subtle policy. It was suggested that the Vatican did not want a particularly Irish University, but rather one whose spirit and trend would render it suitable not only for ultramontane Irish but for English Catholic students. The Dublin college especially was marked out for a great ultramontane centre, drawing its material from England as well as Ireland. Developments were interesting. In a leading article on the Rotunda meeting I referred to the reported secret efforts, and noted that the Jesuits were essentially "cosmopolitan" in their ideas, and had always disliked and distrusted nationality and the national spirit. How much they also disliked the development of will-power or individuality was a commonplace of history. Their objection to any spirit of independence in laymen, and their jealousy of secular priests, were also well understood; all this might be said while admitting their individual good character and high conduct. In Ireland, as elsewhere, I added, they had shown

no friendliness for national ideas. The new University created a new situation of far-reaching national import, as those subtle and unsleeping observers knew too well. This would explain their pressure against a policy that would make the University national and productive of a healthy interest in the home land rather than a passion for emigration and "cosmopolitanism." They were powerful, if not all but masters, at Rome, where in other ages they were condemned.

Discussion of Jesuit policy and attitude grew pointed. It was urged on one side that several young Jesuits were Irish speakers and enthusiasts. It was answered that if the Jesuit authorities had decided on a particular course in regard to the University, it did not matter what young Jesuits had done or what they might think; they had no freedom in the matter, unless they left the Society.<sup>1</sup> Popular opinion was frankly and freely expressed on the whole question. Jesuits, English Catholic leaders, or the Vatican would not be permitted to shape the policy of the University. I learned privately that the Jesuits in Dublin were much perturbed over the whole affair, beginning with Dr. Delaney's address, which was now admitted to have been rather too outspoken. They shrank from Irish criticism or even discussion. It continued; but they soon had comrade subjects of high degree. Public meetings, at which the speech

<sup>1</sup> Individual Jesuits continue to do serious Irish work. The latest example is that of the Rev. L. MacKenna, S.J., Mungret College, Limerick, who issued an excellent Irish-English Phrase-Dictionary in 1911, and was selected as the Principal of the Munster Gaelic College for 1912. The Rev. John C. MacErlean, S.J., is editing for the Irish Texts Society (which has published the first volume) the poems of Daithi O'Bruadair, the most noted Irish poet of a dramatic and transitional period, the second half of the seventeenth century.

was strong and plain, were held up and down the country; trenchant letters from the Rev. Dr. O'Hickey were read at several of them. There was much to say of what blunt people called "wire-pulling," and polite people "diplomacy," behind the scenes. The story of pressure from the Vatican grew more circumstantial. It was said that much against their will the Vatican and the English Catholic authorities had had to allow English Catholic youth to go to Oxford and Cambridge; if a "West-British University" could be established in Dublin this permission to attend Oxford and Cambridge would be withdrawn, and the Dublin institution would be the recognised centre for British Catholics. Some insisted that all this was exceedingly improbable, but the popular outburst against the alleged scheme was suggestive. One thing of which there was no doubt was that the Catholic bishops, with a few exceptions, were opposed to the popular majority on the essential Irish question. It was known that several of their lordships were very emphatic on the matter, and had begun to use their influence to the utmost. A crucial question at the start was the attitude of the County Councils, empowered to strike rates in aid and establish scholarships under the scheme. It did not remain long in doubt. Council after council came to declare that unless Irish got its due, and the University were given a democratic and progressive trend, no rate would be struck. Episcopal and other ecclesiastical influences were at work, but "no Irish, no rate" fared farther and farther as a practical motto. Some who thought they had known rural Ireland were astonished.

In January 1909 the Standing Committee of the



Catholic bishops met and issued a statement of their views. Their lordships, as we expected, were against the idea of making Irish essential at matriculation, either immediately or with a time-limit. They were evidently struck, however, by the general public attitude, and their language though cold was not avowedly hostile. They said—the phrase found ironic fame—that the matter was one for “fair argument,” and their own suggestion was that “bright centres” for the “encouragement” of Irish studies might be formed in the University Colleges; but they did not explain the process, nor suggest how University students who are generally taxed sufficiently by the demands of essential subjects and studies could be greatly helped by “bright centres” for others. It was also obvious to all that if Irish were not made essential at matriculation—the popular demand added “and up to the point at which specialisation begins”—the language would not receive its due in secondary and other institutions, some of them under episcopal auspices, and none of them under popular control. Thus it would happen that various students would enter the University knowing little or no Irish, and the first business in the “bright centres” would be to give them elementary instruction in the language, a curious order in a university.

The bishops' statement was grateful and comforting to the anti-Irish element, the “Catholic snobocracy,” and others. One of the combatants made the singular unhappy prophecy that the county councillors and others would forthwith retire from their position “like whipped curs.” The bishops simply roused a storm of protest and criticism. The Gaelic

League executive promptly held a special meeting and issued a reply to their lordships on every point; but that was only to be expected. What was somewhat unexpected was the vigorous and candid language in the provincial press—the Dublin nationalist dailies still remained “on the fence”—and the fact that various priests who had not been extreme in their attitude either deplored or resented the episcopal document. The public meetings and protests went on with renewed force, while socially anti-episcopal criticism and comment were almost incredibly severe, especially when it came to be known that young priests who had been prominent on the Irish side were prevented from further expressing their views: “muzzled” in popular parlance. Such was the latest form of anti-clericalism. The French judge in Mr. Dooley’s satire first pronounced sentence on Dreyfus and then called the witnesses. Irish bishops admitted that a public question was one for “fair argument,” and straightway ordered the young priests to be silent. This time it was not wicked laymen, obsessed by French or Nonconformist notions, but chosen and pious prelates, who drove priests from public life. As the names of the “muzzled” *sagairt* were published week by week, the irony in Dublin, and I suppose in the country, was grim and mordant. The Rev. Dr. O’Hickey duly shared the fate of country priests; he was “suppressed” by the Standing Committee. Straightway from the press, in a thirty-two-paged pamphlet, entitled *An Irish University or Else* —, came the vigorous letters he had addressed to promoters of Dublin and provincial meetings. With this in circulation on all sides people jested

over the "suppression." Suppressed the Maynooth professor spoke. Or if silenced, as the bishops thought, his silence could be felt—acutely, impressively felt. All Ireland could hear him thinking, as in folk-lore privileged people hear the grass growing.

Bishops and their friends looked with mingled hope and fear to the Convention of the United Irish League held in Dublin in February. The United Irish League, of course, is a distinctly political organisation, and while it contains many strenuous and intelligent workers, it includes, in small towns and country places, a number of men who, though Irish in a general way in their sympathies, are not clear in their grasp of those factors of nationality which are deeper than politics as it is usually understood. Their educational opportunities, their training, and their daily struggle, do not conduce to such clear realisation as a rule. It was thought that a number of them would not readily understand the whole bearing of the language question and might be deceived by the catch-cry about "compulsion," though in that connection the sturdy faith of the county councillors was significant. The usual subtle "influences" were at work for weeks before the Convention began, with the view of getting a majority against a motion to be made in favour of the national demand. Apart from these, Dr. O'Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, a power in the councils of the organisation, was reputed to be one of those prelates most sturdily against essential Irish. Mr. John Dillon, M.P., who wanted a "Catholic University" above all things, was equally thoroughgoing. On the other hand, Mr. John Redmond was friendly, and had helped the Gaelic League in his home-haunt in



Wicklow. Certain priests known to be favourable were prevented from attending the Convention, very noted instances being related in the press at the time. Father Malachi Brennan, one of the ablest of the younger priests, was, however, amongst those who attended, and he it was who seconded, in a cogent speech, the essential Irish resolution proposed in a logical address by Mr. John P. Boland, M.P. (Father Malachi has been a power in Connacht.) Mr. Dillon, to the manifest disappointment of the Convention, opposed the motion in a speech of considerable eloquence and plausibility, sometimes passionately, and sometimes sarcastically interrupted. He dwelt on the dangers of "compulsion," using arguments which would apply equally well, or equally ill, against the Ten Commandments. He was succeeded by Dr. Douglas Hyde, who was present on Mr. Redmond's invitation. The Protestant president of Connradh na Gaedhilge obtained an ovation from a Convention mainly made up of farmers and rural workers, overwhelmingly if not entirely Catholic. His racy speech was received with delight, and when the Irish resolution was put from the chair, three-fourths of the gathering declared for it, the *Freeman* admitted, five-sixths according to other observers. The hostile bishops and their spokesman, Mr. Dillon, were deserted by rural Catholic voters. That was the polite way of putting the matter; others expressed it more bluntly.

In a week or so Cardinal Logue found it necessary to take the defensive in a long communication to the *Freeman's Journal*. Only at one point did he break new ground. He did not help his brethren in

any respect, or affect the question one way or the other. The new point had a certain suggestiveness and irony. His Eminence insisted that Rome had not pressed or influenced the bishops in their recent action, as had been rumoured. We reminded him that in point of fact the bishops had known Rome's desires in the matter long before, and no direct recent order was needed. But it was curiously ironical to find the highest Irish Catholic ecclesiastic obliged to defend the episcopacy against the charge or suggestion of being agents of Rome in an Irish educational struggle.

The University authorities were not yet in a position to approach the question. Some dreaded it; others saw in the popular enthusiasm for Irish culture a happy and a hopeful factor; yet others who had no belief in Irish culture saw that right or wrong a really popular demand must be reckoned with; yet more were in the mood to resist to the last. The nominated Senate appeared to possess representatives of the vital and progressive, the awakening, the transitional, the slumberous, the reactionary, and the hostile elements in the country. The result in the Senate itself was problematical. What was clear in the general situation was that the majority of the people had pointedly and even passionately rejected the leadership and the pleas of the bishops.

At an early stage, the *Lepracán*, a Dublin comic paper, had published an amusing cartoon, entitled "The Ram that Didn't Care a D——." The "Ram" was the Gaelic League, dashing desperately against the long impregnable episcopal stronghold. On the

ramparts mitred brows were calm, episcopal eyes inscrutable. The bleached bones of "Parnellism" and other attacking forces of old years studded the dismal landscape below. We smiled at the grim joke, and said the Irish world had changed. It had.

"My friend," an ecclesiastic of simple heart and apostolic life said to me in Dublin one day in the summer of this same year, "we know very well that the laity simply *must* get what they really want. Only it is just as well not to ask for it at the point of the bayonet."

I might have said that I had not seen overmuch of the "bayonet" on the Irish lay side, at least till lately, while I had seen something rather worse on the other. I refrained, however, because my friend was an oversea visitor, too simple a Christian and too long apart from Ireland to understand our peculiar position without a long explanation. And I did not want to distress him anyway.



## CHAPTER XII

### MAYNOOTH AS STORM-CENTRE

MAYNOOTH has served Rome well, and has done far more than Dublin Castle for anglicisation in Ireland. As candid Irish priests admit, those who believe in Irish ideas could easily make out a strong, an unanswerable case against St. Patrick's College, its ideals and methods. If there has been a change for the better this century it is rather in the mind and attitude of many students and some professors than in the general college policy or that of the bishops—and ultimately the Vatican—at the back of it. A character in *The Plough and the Cross*, an expelled student, thus expressed the point of view of many:—

“I think with respectful awe of its tremendous scheme of milling and moulding, in which all types are fashioned into the one type, cast-ironed as the mind of the Middle Ages. [He had admitted, however, that during the Middle Ages there was of course a great deal of speculation in places.] Year by year Maynooth calls in her conscripts, and trains them up to her Grand Army standard, and when they are trained she sends them forth to post and outpost to hold and regulate the body and soul of an untrained and submissive nation. And the marvel is how her Grand Army believes that it can do the work of Heaven and England at the same time.”

However, though the official attitude is unbending,

yet ever since the early years of Father O'Growney's work there has been a brighter and more Irish spirit in elements of Maynooth. It has sent out thoughtful young priests to work zealously with the people in Irish parishes, more of them to teach in diocesan seminaries. At least two of the newer bishops, Dr. O'Dea, now of Galway, and Dr. Gilmartin, the Bishop of Clonfert, have come directly from its halls to episcopal station, and these are Irish-minded bishops, with a social conscience and impulse. Certain professors have done distinctive Irish work. An interesting example is that of the Rev. Dr. Sheehan, an enthusiast for Greek culture, on the one hand, and for the surviving Irish lore of the "Decies" (in Waterford), on the other. He has been largely responsible for the establishment and the success of the Irish secondary school at Ring, Co. Waterford, and the summer training college in the same haunt. With his friends the Rev. Dr. Henebry, once of the Catholic University of America, Padraig O'Cadhla, "An Fear Mor," and others, he teaches in the college in his holiday term. He has published three collections of local lore: stories, proverbs, prayers, &c., faithfully taken down from the people. Such work is one of the factors that tend to keep the new Irish writing racy of the soil, though in "Decies" lore there is often a sense of classic Irish style as well as raciness. The Irish writing of Pádraig O'Dálaigh, the genial giant who is general secretary of the Gaelic League, and hails from that region, often reminds us of the fact.

As for the Maynooth students they have had the League of St. Columba, which might be described as a Maynooth Gaelic League. A Columban Leaguer,

within or without the college, stands for a rather new type of student or priest. The League has trained a number of Irish speakers and some Irish writers, produced Irish plays, published a bi-lingual annual, and some volumes of Irish sermons, selected from manuscript collections in the college. Its name and work had for a long time been honoured throughout Ireland, and therefore quite a sensation was caused in the middle of June 1909, by the news that the members of the committee were to be punished for the sending of a telegram of sympathy to a great meeting of lay students in the Dublin Mansion House in favour of essential Irish in the University and for general support of the national demand. More extraordinary still, the punishment, it was stated, was to take the form of deprivation of orders! Another amazing piece of intelligence was that the president had lodged a complaint against the professors who had taken part in the University agitation, and had asked the bishops to pass, in their capacity of trustees, a resolution forbidding professors or students to publish any secular matter before submitting it to himself. Obviously so antiquated and reactionary a course would have the effect of driving all independent thought, and all men worth having, out of Maynooth. When we published the points in the *Irish Nation* on the eve of the bishops' meeting many thought both stories incredible.

In the result some half-dozen Columban Leaguers were refused sub-deaconships or deaconships, and though it was understood that the deprivation would be but temporary, it occasioned strong feeling within and without Maynooth. One student of high char-



acter and untiring Irish work was denied ordination to the priesthood in the college, and though he was subsequently ordained in his own diocese by his bishop, his treatment caused considerable criticism. The prelates drew the line at the application of the president for autocratic powers of censorship—the pre-publication of the application and the lively outside comment had spoiled the scheme. But all these things were promptly overshadowed by a new sensation: the dismissal, or the threatened dismissal, of the Rev. Dr. O’Hickey, the Professor of Irish.

Dr. O’Hickey was first called before a committee, or representatives, of the “Visitors,” one of whom was Cardinal Logue. The Cardinal broached the subject of the already famous pamphlet, *An Irish University or Else* —, a collection of letters practically all of which were written and read at public meetings before the statement (or manifesto) of the Standing Committee was issued. Dr. O’Hickey said that he had written therein what he believed to be the truth and to be his duty to write, and that his opinion on the whole matter had undergone no change whatever. The Cardinal told him that the trustees of Maynooth (that is to say, the bishops) would pass a resolution depriving him of his Irish chair in the college. The same intelligence was conveyed to him when he duly appeared before the episcopal trustees at their formal meeting. However, the bishops, or some of them, were anxious to induce Dr. O’Hickey to save them the extreme step of openly driving him away. He was asked if he would resign, or if he would go on the mission in his native diocese of Waterford and Lismore, whose bishop was sympathetic and, on his

own merits, quite anxious to have Dr. O'Hickey. Dr. O'Hickey declined to resign his position as Professor of Irish, and said that while he held that post he could not go, of course, on the mission. Hence there seemed no alternative but the carrying out of the expressed design to dismiss him—that of which the Cardinal had given him notice. When the professor left the bishops he was under the impression that he had been dismissed. Certain prelates had believed, we were told, that the threat to deprive him of his livelihood would cause him to apologise; others were sure that he would resign at any rate. The bishops misjudged their man, as they misjudged other men and things in the Ireland that had come to think for herself. When the final decision could no longer be delayed, they went back on the bold message of the Cardinal. They were content to pass a resolution calling on Dr. O'Hickey to resign. This he declined to do, and there the matter rested for a time, while a storm of criticism swept upon the bishops—from public meeting after meeting, through weekly papers such as the *Irish Nation*, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, and *Sinn Fein*, and the provincial press; but the Dublin dailies maintained a “diplomatic” peace as usual, at any rate editorially.

It was thought that Dr. O'Hickey's mind could be made up for him. On the day succeeding the bishops' meeting, the story that he had resigned was circulated. The *Irish Times* was the first of the Dublin dailies to print it, the Nationalist dailies followed suit. Dr. O'Hickey wrote promptly to characterise the statement as “a baseless fabrication.” The *Irish Times* frankly apologised and—quite justly—“gave

the show away," in common parlance, by declaring that the information had come to it from "a high official in Maynooth." That Maynooth had a high official who could spread an unfounded story about a Doctor of Divinity was a fact that saddened not a few Maynoothmen, and was curious news to "anti-clerics" near and far.

The bishops were in something of a quandary. At last, after a month's consideration, they held a special meeting, and really dismissed Dr. O'Hickey. That in their capacity of Maynooth trustees they had any right whatever to dismiss a competent and devoted professor for utterances on a national question unconnected with his duties—a question their own Standing Committee had declared to be a matter for "fair argument"—Irish observers denied. Dr. O'Hickey forthwith began the prolonged procedure of an appeal to Rome.<sup>1</sup> This necessarily debarred him personally from taking further part in the fray, but the dismissal added fire and force to the criticism against the bishops and intensified the general agitation.

Dr. O'Hickey and the students were not the only people penalised by their lordships during that tense summer spell. The priests in what is known as the Dunboyne Establishment, Maynooth, had also sent, like the Columban Leaguers, a telegram of sympathy to the meeting of lay students in Dublin. *They* could not be deprived of orders, but they did not escape episcopal attention. The decision was that there would be no Dunboyne House course for a year. The young priests who expected to be left there

<sup>1</sup> So far as was known in Ireland no decision had been reached at the beginning of January 1912.



for a third year had to depart, and those who expected to enter it were barred. For the time Dunboyne House was to be a name and a memory and no more. Some such development, or worse, had been expected at far earlier stages, when the bishops were uneasy about the national and intellectual spirit in Maynooth. I had been urged at one difficult period to refer as little as possible to the support and favour which our paper and its teachings found in Young Maynooth; the suppression of Dunboyne House might be one of the immediate consequences of further trouble with the authorities. And now it *was* suppressed for a period.

The *Irish Nation* said the time had come to let the bishops know, not violently but squarely and unmistakably, that the days when they held the Irish nation in the hollow of their hands, or could knock independent-minded men on the head with impunity, were as dead as the Middle Ages. Now the serious "anti-clerics" were those who dwelt in "palaces," and they wanted to penalise priests for endeavouring to be Irishmen. But the Catholic laity did not mean to stand any of these things. And the Catholic laity had begun to understand that in the last resort they controlled the situation, and when they became fully conscious of the fact there would be no more episcopal autocrats. They would be content to be bishops, not grasping at a worldly dominance, but endeavouring to spread the spirit of Christianity, by example quite as much as by precept.

Contributors took up the question. We published a series of articles on "The Nation and the Election of Bishops." F. O'Cinnéide (brother of Mr. Bart

Kennedy), a member of the executive of the Gaelic League, but bolder in most things than the majority of his colleagues, wrote (*Irish Nation*, July 17, 1909):—

“It is high time that we bestirred ourselves, and began to teach their lordships a few ancient moss-grown truths that they appear to be forgetting. One is that they are not the Church, but only a part thereof. . . . We have a right to a voice in many Church affairs, even including the election of bishops. At present the only Church affair we are allowed to take part in is the providing of funds. With this solitary exception all our ecclesiastical rights have been filched from us by the clergy, and not only that, but for a long time back our secular rights are being usurped by the same section of the Church. . . . What we want to do is to let the Pope understand that we will accept no bishop who is known to be an enemy to Ireland, or suspected of being antagonistic to Irish aspirations. We must demand a veto on future appointments to episcopal offices in Ireland. Our ancient right was to elect bishops ourselves. A veto on their election will do in these days. Every nation [or ‘State’] has this veto. Some have even a veto in the election to the Papacy itself. The Pope could not treat any other nation in this matter as he treats Ireland. No other nation would allow him . . . Then we should in time have truly national bishops in Ireland, who would support everything Irish and try to build up the nation. The excellent priests who are now muzzled or kept in inferior positions by Roman and English influences would in due course receive their legitimate position in our

Church. The episcopate itself would thus become really and truly 'illustrious,' as it would no longer be recruited from that section of the priesthood which rejects nationality, but would be open to all priests of learning and capacity and generous instincts. In time the long-faded glory of the Irish Church would be revived."

As a specimen of clerical plain speaking I may refer to the speech of Father O'Kieran, P.P., at the Monaghan Feis—these great gatherings were not only literary, musical, and social rallies, but provided a sort of popular congress. Father O'Kieran (as described in the local press, and in the *Irish Nation* of July 10, 1909) first referred to the necessity of making the University democratic, and to the lever which essential Irish would afford "the poor man's son." He then declared that "the bishops of Ireland had no right to tell the whole Irish nation that they would not tolerate essential Irish in this Irish University. The bishops would not pay for the University. It would be paid for out of the pockets of the people and out of the country rates, and every man and woman had as much right to have a say about what language his or her children would be taught as the bishops had. As a matter of fact, if the bishops of Ireland were a little less blind, they would see not merely that the thing (they advocated) was not in the interests of religion, but that it was directly against the interests of religion."

At this stage the older ecclesiastics, and several of the younger ones, were amazed by a new project that began to be discussed. This was: that in the



event of the national demand being rejected by the senators of the "National," Catholics should send their sons to Trinity College, Dublin—against which prelates had warned them for generations. It was urged that T.C.D. authorities had become more friendly to Ireland and Irish ideas, and would doubtless go much further on the path. Why should not Catholics make themselves as much at home with Trinity Protestants as Protestants like Dr. Hyde and others had done with themselves in the Gaelic League? Padraig O'Shea, well known to Irish readers as "Conan Maol," was one of those who advocated the "Bridge to Trinity" in the *Irish Nation*. There was no doubt of "Conan's" Catholicity, and he was a popular personality. He had published Irish history and stories whose style was stronger, sterner, more individual, more reserved than that of most of the new writers; it seemed the style of one who brooded and talked to himself of austere, uncommon, or trying things rather than spoke out his heart to an audience. And as a public speaker his virility was varied by a humour strangely compounded of acidity, raciness, and frivolity. This time, however, he was in deadly earnest.

As a matter of fact, more Catholic students had begun to enter Trinity College. The enmity or coldness between T.C.D. and the Gaelic League itself had been softening for some time. In earlier years there had been vehement frays between Trinity professors and Leaguers over the historic Irish nation, Gaelic culture, and other things. The passion and the language had been explosive. But if a poet and a philosopher crash against each other in a crowded

street their moods and language for the moment are unlikely to be poetical and philosophical. They may even swear a little. They discover their affinity afterwards. Some Trinity professors and several Leaguers discovered in due course that they had a certain kinship in their love both of culture and of freedom of thought. Eventually a Gaelic Society was established in Trinity, and its work has been good. In other happy ways the long alien institution seemed to turn more kindly to Ireland. In 1909 Dr. Traill, its Provost, personally friendly to Irish, brought a flash of enlivening light into our lives by the earnest proposal that those who shrank for any reason from Irish in certain of our educational courses might have Esperanto and welcome as an alternative. Professors of Trinity lapsed into unacademic levity in discussing the scheme, and the Commissioners of Irish primary education were not quite respectful. Outsiders saw Cervantic possibilities in the devotion of "Don Traill" to the "Lady Esperanto," and the Provost had the pleasure of observing that the Irish imagination was still at least facetiously creative.

The University battle continued for another year, the popular spirit as intense as ever, while many of the lay and clerical senators of the National University found it exceedingly difficult to make up their minds. The first serious trial came on the 5th of May 1910, when the Senate accepted the proposal of the Academic Council that five subjects for matriculation could be selected out of as many groups (modern Irish was one of the items in each of two groups), and then after a battle royal adopted a rider to the effect that Irish-born students who did not take Irish

at matriculation should be required, during the undergraduate course, to attend the Irish Language, Irish History, and Irish Literature lectures, and duly satisfy the Irish professors (Dr. Hyde, Eoin MacNeill, &c.) as to their knowledge in these lines. The rider was only carried by the casting vote of the chairman, Dr. Walsh, Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, one of the few prelates inclined to be friendly from the outset, though he kept his own counsel. This decision of itself would not satisfy the councils or the people, but it was understood as being intended only for the first few years, after which period of readjustment the secondary schools and colleges would be in a more satisfactory position from the Irish point of view. During the next couple of months the Senate, helped by public criticism and pressure, underwent a change of spirit, and at its meeting on the 23rd of June, Dr. Hyde's resolution that Irish be essential or obligatory at matriculation in 1913 was carried by twenty-one votes to twelve. So the saga was over and the Gael was victor. Once again an Idea had brought the mighty low, and dreamers of dreams had proved stronger than an army with banners.

It had been a dramatic struggle of two crowded years, a struggle in which those who had a high faith in Ireland and her capacities and resources fought with pessimists and formalists, principalities and powers, that had not. At the outset, taking the "practical" view, the odds against the national educationists were overwhelming. Wiseacres scorned the notion that the "common people" could be aroused on such an issue, especially with the bishops as a whole against them, or that three-fourths of



Ireland had heart or soul for any high emprise whatever. Yet it was essentially a people's battle and a people's victory. After long rigidity and stagnation, one could feel that native mind had been released and had become in a measure creative. The masses saw themselves and Ireland in a new light. That was the charm of it; thus came surprises. Incidentally the campaign was full of colour and character, for happily the opposing forces numbered powerful personalities who put forth all their might. So we never lacked drama. But the deeper appeal of it all was the new feeling in the people, the electric sense at meeting and festival, the spell that made Ireland seem more human and more spacious. We had been tilling more of the Untilled Fields than we knew.

## CHAPTER XIII

### AN ARCHIEPISCOPAL PINCH OF SNUFF

IN 1909 in the midst of the general University struggle, Dr. Healy, the Archbishop of Tuam, was the hero, or one of the heroes, of a fray that had piquant as well as strenuous phases. I am afraid that there are Catholic laymen, and even priests, who cannot resist the temptation to have a brush with his Grace when opportunity offers, and as the battle proceeds their enjoyment is almost wicked. Dr. Healy is a very human and challenging personality, a bonny fighter when he is roused, and he affords a sense of largeness to the ensuing struggle. A young Irish priest once told me on returning from a visit to America that Mr. Roosevelt impelled him to believe in the transmigration of souls; he was sure that Mr. Roosevelt's body held the soul of a positive and combative Irish parish priest. To some minds, on the other hand, Archbishop Healy might be an argument for reincarnation; they would see in him the re-embodiment of one of the old king-archbishops who when duty called, or seemed to call, left the sacerdotal sphere for the battlefield. These, of course, are less clangorous and less thrilling times, and the "field," though exciting, is only martial metaphorically speaking. Dr. Healy, however, gives it a suggestion of distinction. He is a big man in more ways than one; the most towering, vital, and irrepressible personality

amongst the Irish Catholic episcopacy, the one who brings it "into touch" with life at most points. He has achieved things in the study—including a big book on Ireland's ancient schools and scholars—as well as in outer spheres, and he has social amenities. No other prelate is more at home or unbends so much at the festive board. He expresses unpopular political views and tells the masses sharp social truths on occasion. He occupies a curious position, not easy to explain, between popularity and unpopularity.

It was understood at an early stage that he was one of the strongest episcopal opponents of essential Irish in the National University. It was stated, and the statement was not contradicted, that the priests of the local college (St. Jarlath's) were, in popular parlance, "muzzled" on the matter. In the circumstances the decision to hold a public meeting in Tuam—at his door, so to say—in favour of the national demand, was regarded as an "unfriendly act." It proved to be one of the most imposing demonstrations of the year. A multitude mustered, Tuam had a gala day, the athletic-minded began with Gaelic games, and at the great public meeting emphatic things were said about the people's will and its opponents, things that seemed, and were meant, to apply very near home.

A little later came the archbishop's turn, or one of them. In an address at Claremorris, of which a great deal was heard at the time, he declared amongst other things, according to the report in a local paper: "There were people in Ireland now who taught young men not to care for the Pope, or the bishops, or the priests, or their authority. They were taught to be independent—but independent agents to the devil—



and he warned the faithful to be on their guard against them." It was made very plain, however, that in various matters a good many of the faithful had learned to think for themselves, devil or no devil.

Then came a surprise and a storm over the Gaelic Training College at Mount Partry in Co. Mayo, one of the most popular of the summer institutions for the training of teachers of Irish in modern methods. These colleges, partly financed by the executive of the Gaelic League, partly by local and general contributions, are managed in a democratic way by mixed committees of lay and clerical supporters. The death of the Ard-Ollamh, or principal teacher, the young Irish writer, Micheál Breathnach, rendered a new appointment necessary in 1909. Mount Partry is in the archdiocese of Tuam, and the archbishop owned the building, and had a place on the committee. Dr. Healy and the majority of the committee differed at first over the choice of the new Principal, or rather, while they had no objection to Pádraig O'Domhnallain, the applicant he favoured, who was thoroughly competent and popular, they objected to the fact that the archbishop as chairman ruled out, as technically he was entitled to do, another prominent Gael, Dr. J. P. Henry, who had not formally applied, but who, in their opinion, ought to be given the position. After a pointed discussion, the archbishop declared, according to shorthand notes taken at the time: "That college is mine, and I can do what I like with it. I will appoint him [the Principal] myself and send my own teachers to it." It was an interesting position. His Grace owned the material building, or held it in trust, while the committee members insisted that *they* owned and

controlled the "college," which mattered. The exoteric and esoteric view again! Nor was that the only trouble. When a resolution in favour of essential Irish in the National University was brought forward by Colonel Moore (brother of Mr. George Moore) Dr. Healy refused to take it. "I'll refuse to take any resolution on the question," he said. "I could not be a loyal bishop and do so, and I don't see how any priest who supports such a resolution can consider himself a loyal priest. The bishops of Ireland have spoken on the point, and their decision binds."

Colonel Moore reminded him that even the bishops had said it was a matter for fair discussion. Dr. Healy answered that "it was a matter for fair discussion before they spoke." A very singular answer indeed, as it seemed to mean: "In a certain pronouncement the bishops say a certain question is a matter for fair discussion, but there and then it ceases to be even open to discussion." A little later Colonel Moore said: "Besides that, the people of Ireland have spoken with no uncertain voice in favour of Irish, and their opinions should be respected." His Grace: "The People of Ireland indeed! What do they know about it? Do you mean to tell me that the fellows that kicked football here a few days ago [the committee meeting was in Tuam], and held a meeting here, knew or understood what they were talking about? I would not give a pinch of snuff for their opinion."

Quite a furore was caused on the publication of these details. The executive of the Gaelic League declared that it would make no contribution to the funds of the college, and could not recognise its

certificates if it were admitted to be a private institution—that is to say, one in the hands of the archbishop and not democratically governed and directed—protests arose from subscribers and supporters, the archbishop's claim that he owned the "college," as distinct from the building, was stoutly denied, and the question of transferring the institution, the scholastic entity, to a new quarter was quickly taken into consideration. The necessity, however, did not arise. The air gradually cleared after the storm. At its next meeting the committee decided that the power of appointment of teachers and the fixing of the courses of study must rest with itself in the future as they had done in the past, while the archbishop could have "moral and disciplinary control over the college" and welcome. Some outsiders thought the latter point rather weak, to others it was vague or puzzling. In practice it meant nothing in particular.

Dr. Healy was apparently relieved by the decision and the way out of the crisis, especially as he and the committee were now at one regarding the Principal—Dr. Henry had declined to go forward. It was understood that his Grace had been quite astonished over the popular outburst. He possibly assumed that the "independent agents to the devil" had increased. As for the College, when it became clear that it was to be really free and democratic as before, new students flocked to it; indeed, the ensuing session was a record one, and bright and vivacious were the tales and tidings which we in Dublin received from some who rounded culture with gaiety away in pleasant Partry by the waters of Loch Mask. Clerical students, no less than lay, wrote sometimes with a delicate airiness on the subject of the good deeds of



archbishops. Even the bards intervened. I recall one stanza :—

“ He thought he saw a prelate take  
 A pinch of snuff at Tuam,  
 He looked again and found it was  
 A Connacht College ‘ boom.’  
 ‘ We’re up to snuff,’ the Ollamh said,  
 And built another room ! ”

There was no airiness, however, in the popular answer to Archbishop Healy’s compliments regarding essential Irish and the opinion of the people. It was all in hot and deadly earnest, though some of us tried to make the “ Pinch of Snuff,” which became famous in its way, a sort of relieving distraction. The whole tale was spread through Irish-America in due course, and priests from the archdiocese of Tuam who were out on collecting missions on behalf of home churches and other wants found the ordeal of life intensified.

Amongst the columns of criticism and comment which I published after the committee episode was a suggestive short article from the late Father George Tyrrell. A “ Layman ” had urged that Dr. Healy’s action was calculated to arouse real anti-clericalism. Whereupon, in the *Irish Nation* of March 27, 1909, over the signature “ Exul,” Father Tyrrell wrote :—

“ There is much wisdom in ‘ Layman’s ’ letter (March 20th) on Archbishop Healy’s anti-clericalism. I have constantly heard it said, both by those who hope for and those who fear such an issue, that should Ireland become anti-clerical she will go the way of France—only faster. God forbid ! And I

say this, not from hostility to France, which I love, but from grief at her religious condition, which I deplore because I love her. It is my firm conviction that, though distinct, religion and patriotism are closely allied, and that a strong and healthy patriotism must be rooted in idealism, mysticism, and religion. The cause of our country must be for us the cause of our God, if it is to inspire our deepest enthusiasm and incite us to the noblest self-sacrifice. Nor is there any Chauvinism in speaking thus of the God of Ireland as though He were other than the God of France and England. He is the special God of every man and of every nation, just so far as their cause is the cause of truth and justice ; and to call Him the God of Ireland is only to express our belief that our cause is right and that therefore it is His cause. The misery of France and of other Latin nations is that they have been so long educated to identify the cause of clericalism with that of religion, Christianity, and Catholicism, that in revolting (on what are at root religious principles) against the former they have revolted against the latter ; and, in so doing, have cut off the mystical sources of patriotism and other ideals. Extremes create one another. Clericalism—the exploitation of religion in the temporal and political interests of the clergy or their masters—is responsible for Continental freemasonry and the anti-religious campaign. It is easier to make the Devil responsible ; but we should not fall back on supernatural explanations where natural suffice. The Devil may be ultimately responsible if we can find no natural causes, of which, however, there are plenty. Ireland is mystical and religious by nature and temperament, and should she

cease to be so she will never realise herself greatly ; she will drift into practical materialism and go to pieces as the Latin nations are doing. And in both cases clericalism will be to blame. Let us take to heart the object-lesson offered us by those nations. The one remedy for clericalism is religion—true, living religion that springs from the heart of the people and bears the colour and impress of their national character ; not a system manufactured and imposed from outside and stuck into them like a rootless flower into a child's garden. In the past, to a great extent, the Catholicism of Ireland has been Irish—implanted, no doubt, from outside, but taking root in the soil of the Irish heart and mind and tradition, and betraying the character of its new home in flower and blossom. It has also been Roman, in that it ever looked with reverence to the See of Peter as reflecting the faith of the Catholic world and leading the nations, less by command than by the example and practice of that faith. But it is idle to deny in the face of history that the political (at all times so fatal to the religious) interests of the Holy See have often interfered with the free autonomous expansion of Irish Catholicism, and by pressing it into an Italian mould in Italian interests have tended to destroy its Irish character and give it an exotic complexion, thus loosening its grip on the heart of the people. Thank God, the evil is not yet too far advanced to be remediable, yet we are in some respects on the slope by which France has slid down to the abyss. Our hope is in our younger clergy who, unlike the mass of their French brethren, are deeply imbued with a patriotic and democratic spirit ; and still more in the living faith of so many of our laity



who will never allow Catholicism to become a purely clerical interest and monopoly.

“Finally, if Ireland is ever to be delivered from the weakness of religious disunion, if the doors of her Church are to be thrown open to all men of good will, who earnestly seek the truth and believe in the reconciliation of faith and science, of religion and democracy, it will not be by the predominance of a spirit of exclusiveness and intolerance which has nothing to do with religion, and is merely the parasite of clericalism.”

Similar hopes and ideals had often been expressed by the forward Irish priests and Catholic laymen in the course of the whole previous decade, and were more or less at the back of the numerous struggles with autocratic or ultramontane or formalistic ecclesiastics—struggles which were generally precipitated through opposition to the rising national spirit and will in matters of education. Slowly but steadily a very appreciable part of the Irish Catholic world had come to realise the distinction between clericalism and religion. Anti-clericalism sometimes found vigorous exposition. Even clerics could lend a hand in the work. In December 1908, in a letter to the general secretary of the Gaelic League, a letter published far and wide, a priest of high standing and long service in the Church in Ireland said: “God knows if there were more anti- (certain) clerics and more anti- (the petty intolerance and stupid, narrow-minded despotism of occasional) clerics, both the Irish clergy and laity would benefit enormously, and so would the influence of the clergy and the best interests of religion.” But other and wider ground was taken by lay critics. I give one out of numerous examples.

Mr. P. S. O'Hegarty, one of the most prominent and pointed of the *Irish Nation* contributors, wrote in the issue of September 4th, 1909 :—

“ It would be folly and dishonesty to deny that the country has been, and still remains to some extent, a priest-ridden country. That arose out of the mental confusion which followed the replacement of good Irish by broken English—out of the fact that all the natural leaders of the people deserted Ireland in the eighteenth century, and that she commenced the nineteenth with the Nation reduced to the democracy, and with the aristocracy and middle classes hostile. But that is changing in our time, and the Nation, coming again into its own mind, has a mind to emancipate itself and take its destiny into its own hands. There is a natural reluctance on the one hand to give up the exercise of an authority which with use had almost grown to be a right, and on the other hand there is a natural tendency to emancipate itself with as much gentleness as possible. In cases where the issue was clear, even when she was most subservient to the clergy, Ireland has always followed only herself. Now she is beginning to see the issue all the time, and not spasmodically at long intervals ; and therefore she must take things secular into her own hands and keep them there. . . . When we are called anti-clerical it really means that we are insisting for the Nation as a whole and for every individual in it that the Church should confine itself to such matters as come within its province, and that secular matters should remain secular. And we are anti-clerical, all of us, in that sense, and rightly so. It is an ancient battle, that has had to be fought in every country in the world, and we also must fight it—nay, we are

fighting it. And if we are to emancipate the Nation we must fight it to a finish."

The place of clerics in the Nation, the rights of laymen in the Church, the idealistic side of nationality, the mystical essence of religion, and other pertinent and vital things, were much with us at stage after stage.

To return to Archbishop Healy. I would leave the reader with a partial and unfair impression of his bold and hale personality if I did not mention that he can talk sheer and straight to the all-claiming clerics on occasion. At the meeting of the Maynooth Union in 1907 he bluntly told the clerical managers that their retention of their position depended on intelligence, efficiency, and tolerance. "Prove yourselves intelligent and efficient," he said. "Look after the schools, visit them constantly, make things comfortable for the poor, shivering children, treat the teachers with kindness and consideration, and do away with all spirit of domination and tyranny." Straight talk, verily! And in the case of the majority of the clerical managers, as the teachers make clear, entirely and painfully necessary. In October 1909, when certain clergymen at the conference of the Irish Catholic Truth Society had tried to make the flesh of their audience creep on the subject of what they imagined to be Socialism, Dr. Healy declared it to be the duty of the State, or the Government, or the Community to find work for everybody who is able to work and wants work; that furthermore all those who are able to work ought to work, clinching his argument with the quotation from St. Paul, "If any man does not work, neither let him eat." Anti-socialist clerics were sadly taken aback at the alliance of Tuam and Tarsus.



But for a goodly period after the Connacht College trouble and the "Pinch of Snuff" declaration the bold archbishop was in a somewhat embarrassing position. Many of the people, and a number of the priests, "were not playing" with him. As his episcopal silver jubilee approached his friends grew nervous. The prospects for the social celebration of the event were not at all to their liking. Leading townsmen whom they pressed to join a Celebration Committee were polite but cold. People pointed to the fact that on his own showing Dr. Healy did not care a pinch of snuff for their opinion, so why should they go to the trouble of affecting an appreciation which would not be appreciated? A somewhat piquant story was sent to me at this stage by a well-known correspondent:—

"Tuesday's *Freeman* had an inspired account from Tuam about the 'enthusiasm' manifested by the priests and the generous subscriptions they are giving. The truth is that at the meeting of the clergy, after the Retreat, a champion of the archbishop's proposed [of course unknown to him] that all parish priests be asked to subscribe £5, and all curates £2, to a testimonial. As a ballot was not taken it can be quite understood that no one cared to raise an objection to this involuntary tax. If the vote had been by ballot it is certain that the result would not be so satisfactory."

The picture of the parish priests producing their sovereigns or bank notes and looking pleasant was much appreciated at the time. I do not think that Dr. Healy personally paid any particular heed to popularity or unpopularity. For much in his career he deserved the former, and due admission was made

of the fact when the actual celebration came. But the point is the intensity of the feeling and opposition which he aroused when he ran counter to the popular ideal regarding Irish, and to what, in the case of the Connacht College, was considered democratic right. I have not quoted the stronger language used. Expressive in the passion of the hour, it is a little too hot for history.

A brother prelate scored neatly off his Grace at a later stage. When the time came for the appointment of a Dean of Residence in the Galway College of the National University, it was understood that Dr. Healy intended to propose a favoured priest of his own archdiocese. At the meeting of the governing body, however, the new Bishop of Galway, Dr. O'Dea—understood from the first to have been “sound” on the essential Irish question—forestalled him by proposing Father MacIlhinney, an esteemed young Irish-Ireland *sagart*. Dr. Healy seemed nonplussed. It would look very bad indeed, especially with so many laymen to the fore, were an archbishop to put forward a candidate in opposition to a bishop's. He looked uncomfortable. Then a thought struck him. He asked in his high and not entirely musical voice: “But does Father MacIlhinney know Irish? Isn't that the great thing nowadays?” Bishop O'Dea arose, and said blandly: “Yes, Father MacIlhinney knows Irish well, and in regard to the language and its place he is an even greater enthusiast than—his Grace of Tuam himself.” When the laughter had subsided Father MacIlhinney was unanimously elected.

Dr. Healy is the dominant personage of the Irish Catholic Truth Society; and it is a curious fact that

when it holds its conferences or other gatherings in the Irish capital, Dr. Walsh, the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin, is never present and never recognises it in any way. The I.C.T.S. is treated with delicate irony or pungent sarcasm by various Irish Catholic laymen and by some Irish priests. Others who wish to be kindly in all things say that at least it does no harm and keeps some printers in employment. It publishes something that is honestly intended to be Irish history, little pious romances, and well-meaning booklets and snippets of various orders, including a modest biography of "the patron saint of priests' housekeepers." It is a kindly intellectual nursery for children of larger growth. From some aspects its policy might be described as that of offering a thin biscuit to a starving man just to keep the life in him. As an index of episcopal and clerical perception of the spiritual and intellectual needs of the age it is eloquent beyond telling. As mental sustenance for the children of the race that moulded the Red Branch saga and the tales and songs of Fionn and his Companions its offerings are affecting—to tears. For the emigrant missionaries that ever in ecclesiastical visions go forth to evangelise and philosophise the far lands that cry in the darkness for light its creations are magnificent in their simplicity. And the towering personality of his Grace of the West at its head all the time, directing and blessing the mountain in labour—what an artless child can a big man be !



## CHAPTER XIV

### BISHOPS AND FESTIVALS

IN 1908, after it had come to be understood that the Catholic bishops as a whole had one conception of the University position and a host of the laity another, two strange situations also arose locally, one in a northern diocese, the other in a southern diocese. They differed curiously in character, each occasioned strong feeling and criticism, and each was attended with certain ironies.

In Donegal—diocese of Raphoe—the priests, as might be expected in rather poverty-stricken quarters where capable lay leaders were not so numerous as elsewhere, had acquired rather exceptional prominence in the guiding of the Gaelic League branches. Some did the work well, several were not exactly zealous over its serious educational or teaching side. In such matters the annual Feis, as already explained, is one special test of achievement. Feis Thir Chonaill (as the Donegal Feis was called) caused great dissatisfaction in 1907, when it was held in Letterkenny, the diocesan centre. It was severely criticised by northern contributors to the *Peasant*, described as ill-arranged, unordered, backward, and looking like a side-show to a big A.O.H. or Hibernian demonstration arranged for the same day, and addressed by some of the priests. Thousands of the Hibernians, like Orangemen, are rather simple-minded, impulsive

folk, easily swayed by more clever people ; a good deal of political melodrama has been manufactured in connection with them. Later on a proportion of the Hibernians drank more than was good for them, and their conduct on the homeward way was not edifying. One of the priests wrote to defend the Feis and the Hibernians as well as he could, but the general case was unshaken, and there remained a feeling that Letterkenny on the day in question showed a sad contrast to the order that had come to characterise Irish towns during Feiseanna. Curiously enough some Donegal Hibernians wrote in a grateful spirit about the criticism, and expressed the hope that it would lead to searching of heart and amendment in sections of the " Ancient Order."

In the following year, 1908, the Donegal Feis Committee, consisting largely of priests, decided to hold the festival in a remote part of the county, at the Rock of Doon, a centre with particular Catholic associations, having long been a place of pilgrimage on the 29th of June, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. It was for this Catholic holiday that the Feis was also arranged. In the circumstances the event at the very start promised to be as much a pilgrimage as a Gaelic festival. In point of fact it proved to be largely a religious service and demonstration. It was begun with High Mass on the Rock, there was a sermon, and certain subsequent addresses were like sermons. The Bishop of Raphoe, Dr. O'Donnell, the great power in Donegal affairs, was present in state, and preached or spoke ; there were several priests, with a multitude of people. The Gaelic competitions, when they came, were badly arranged and managed ; as on the previous year at Letterkenny, the actual

“Feis” was a secondary business and a comparative failure. The Oireachtas Committee of the Gaelic League in Dublin, which issues the formal permits for such festivals after examining and sanctioning their programmes, had been left in ignorance of the nature of the new departure. Curiously enough, one of the speakers during the Feis proceedings—so far as there was a Feis—was a well-known Belfast lawyer, Mr. Francis Joseph Bigger, an enthusiastic Irish antiquary, a Protestant, and a popular as well as a somewhat unconventional personality. When the details reached Dublin the criticism of “Feis Thir Chonaill,” 1908, was decidedly frank and free. The *Peasant*, as was duly proved, expressed the prevalent view when it said :—

“The non-denominational principle of the Gaelic League was entirely abandoned by the clergymen who had control of the Feis, and Ulster Presbyterians and Protestants had a striking illustration of the value of the professions that Connradh na Gaedhilge provides a friendly and congenial meeting-ground for all creeds and classes of Irishmen and Irishwomen—at least a striking illustration of their value where certain types of the clergy have matters their own way. . . . The Catholic Church and all the Churches have every day of the year in which to labour for soul and body, and hardly any normal being in Ireland shows the least disposition to interfere with their work. On the other hand, a Feis of the Gaelic League in any region comes only once a year, and it ought to be on such a day and in such a place and in such an environment and circumstances that the work of the Feis and the purpose of the League can be thoroughly attended to and adequately



advanced. It ought to be entirely unnecessary to maintain that on the scene of a Feis nothing which could in the least degree hurt religious or political susceptibilities should be introduced. This should be a matter of honour with all workers and all others concerned. . . .

“Through Feis Thir Chonail a million and a half Irish Protestants and Presbyterians were notified that, so far as certain Irish priests are concerned, they are not wanted in the Gaelic League. The pioneers and leaders of the League were informed in equally striking fashion that they may dream of and preach a United Ireland as much as they please, but that where those particular types of priests are in power there shall be no union, no friendly and kindly ‘garden of peace,’ no real nationality; that we must give up the idea of a common country, and dwell in our several concentration camps. For our own part, and we speak for thousands of Irish Catholics, some of whom are slowly taking heart to speak for themselves, we refuse to do anything of the kind. . . . They [the Donegal clergy] have no right whatever to try to wrench the Gaelic League from its all-Ireland mission and purpose, and they cannot be allowed to do so.”

Against this let us take the view of Mr. Bigger, writing as a Protestant:—

“Objection is made to having a religious service at all at the same time as the Feis. The religious service at Doon Rock on the 29th is an institution, so could not be interfered with. Of course, the date of the Feis could have been altered. To my mind the choice of such a festival at such a place as Doon

Rock was a very excellent arrangement and most suitable for all the people, especially those from remote parts, at a busy season of the year when it would be unreasonable to take two days when one would do. The Rock of Doon is far distant from many parts of Donegal, and thousands of people made very early starts that morning to be there, and it was obligatory on most of them to hear Mass, and so their Church very properly arranged it for them. Under similar circumstances Protestants could have made similar arrangements to suit their requirements. . . . Thus was Feis Thir Chonail opened by Catholic [Bishop O'Donnell] and Protestant [himself] without any friction or the slightest ill-will or the remotest dereliction of the principles of the Gaelic League. All the speakers expressed entire satisfaction at this union of Irishmen in a common cause. Nothing could have been more perfect, more complete, more harmonious."

Here then is another notable instance of the Irish Protestant taking the ultra-clerical side. Catholic criticism at the time was strongly the other way. When the following year the matter of the Donegal Feis came up once more it was found that the proposed arrangements were similar to those of 1908. There was to be High Mass as before, but it was pointed out that the Feis proper would be quite apart. The Gaelic League authorities in Dublin refused to sanction the Feis in the circumstances, and the Donegal festival dropped out of the list of League events. The clergy organised the pilgrimage and religious demonstration in their own way. The relations of the Leaguers and many of the clergy, especially higher

clergy, have remained more or less strained ever since in Donegal. Much of the region is poor, and the independent lay elements are scattered. However, Irish is taught in practically all the Donegal schools, and the Gaelic Training College in remote Clochaneely in the summer and early autumn links the people in a delightful way with a larger life. Special social evenings are arranged for all who like to come, and professors, students, lay and clerical, and peasantry fraternise in a fashion that could not well be more cheerily democratic. This is the one rural Gaelic College whose Principal is a lady—Miss Agnes O'Farrelly, M.A., one of the lecturers in the Dublin College of the National University. The way these Gaelic training colleges link city culture and country lore is novel and remarkable.

The trouble in the southern diocese, in Kerry, was of quite another order, though it also arose out of a Feis: that of Killarney, known as Feis na n-Airne. It appeared that this Feis, in 1908, was not organised and conducted in the interests and for the purposes of the Gaelic League, but as an aid to the Killarney Cathedral Fund, to which all the monetary proceeds were devoted. The suggestion came from the Bishop of Kerry, who had not been regarded as altogether an enthusiastic admirer of the Gaelic League. The full facts did not reach the League authorities in Dublin till the Feis was over. Then it transpired that the chief organiser for Munster, Fionán MacColum, an exceedingly popular and competent official, had actually taken part in the Feis, though knowing the whole circumstances—he apparently thought it good policy to go out of one's way once in a while to befriend a



bishop. In Dublin, however, we took a more detached view, and insisted that to turn the Gaelic League at any point into a Church collecting agency, whether the Church was Catholic or Protestant, was a breach of its constitution and its spirit, though in his personal capacity a League organiser or anybody else was quite welcome to devote his whole income to the Killarney Cathedral if he so desired. The *Peasant* said, however, that more moderate ambitions in the way of cathedrals might not be inadvisable; that a great cathedral within measurable distance of wretched slums—which must have a lowering effect on the spiritual condition of the people—seemed incongruous; that churches were noble things when erected in the right spirit, but we should also remember that Christianity was advanced and Providence revered and praised through the erection of bright schools for children, halls and libraries for the town and village folk, healthy and serviceable homes for all; that we might easily have them all: the great churches, the bright schools, the stimulating halls, the inspiring libraries, the healthy homes, had we a nobler social spirit, and a more practical Christian one—and if we reduced the national drink-bill by some millions.

In the result Mr. MacColuim was reprimanded, and the Killarney branch of the Gaelic League, which contained some devoted workers, was suspended for a period. At the same time I received and published some outspoken contributions on the burning question of collections for church and cathedral funds—with pointed references to slums and poverty—the most trenchant of all being from a priest who had an

extensive knowledge of Kerry. He relieved his feelings in a long article not only on the cathedral question but on the position of Irish education and other things. Incidentally he threw light on remote Catholic circumstances :—

“ I consider it a shame to lavish money on a cathedral already completed, which is now being partly pulled down and rebuilt to satisfy the æsthetic sense of certain people . . . while down in Iveragh we find Catholic churches in a rather dilapidated condition, unworthy of the Sacramental Presence, and certainly not very creditable to Kerry men. . . . By all means let us have beautiful churches in Kerry—as beautiful as we can make them—but before building large cathedrals let us see that the little country churches are not only neat and respectable but also comfortable, from the point of view of the worshippers that frequent them.”

These northern and southern “ events ” were suggestive illustrations of the varying attitudes and moods of prelates according to circumstances. The developments in both cases were also expressive signs of the times in their own fashion.

## CHAPTER XV

### MATERIALISM AND MYSTICISM

ON the single subject of the discussions, reviews, confidences, and hopes that I heard expressed regarding religion and theology during five eventful years in Ireland, I might write a volume rather larger than this present book. Only on one occasion did the conversation bear on Catholicism versus Protestantism, and then it was mainly a consideration, and an extremely interesting one it proved, of the different kinds of mysticism in the two churches. Of controversy in the ordinary sense I heard nothing. There was plenty of discussion regarding the position of clerics in the nation, and their attitude to science, intellectual life, the new movements, and so on, with unsparing incidental criticism of those bishops and other ecclesiastics who would keep the country in what was often described as a series of sectarian concentration camps. Of religious and theological speculation and readjustment there was and is a great deal, particularly amongst students. Certain of the developments are called scepticism by numerous ecclesiastics and some women ; but, as I have sometimes pointed out to such alarmed souls, it can scarcely be scepticism to reject a superficial explanation and search for, and perhaps find, a deeper one. Those same agitated spirits also confound faith and belief at every step. Any rejection or outgrowth of a particular belief or explanation is



to them a loss of faith. Disbelief in the quaint and fantastic miracles ascribed to St. Patrick is loss of faith, though one may hold that miracles—to normal eyes—are possible, in the sense that beings or highly evolved souls who are masters of higher laws than we are normally conscious of can work them. Disbelief in the creation story in Genesis, literally and exoterically regarded, is loss of faith, though one may hold a highly philosophical and spiritual theory of Creation. We might take a hundred instances. For good or ill, or rather a mixture of good and ill, the view-point of a great deal of the Irish Catholic world has been changing for a long time, and the results show us several grades from spirituality and mysticism to mere indifference and materialism. For the latter, Maynooth priests—Columban Leaguers—put much of the blame upon clerical education. They speak rather strongly on the matter, declaring that sundry doctors, lawyers, and others, who have passed through certain institutions, are a standing criticism of their educators. Independence and character are sapped, and deterioration follows. Cities and country towns afford unpleasant illustrations in point. Irish secondary education is very largely in clerical hands, and it has turned out a large proportion of snobs and intellectual weaklings, whose religious spirit is superficial. The primary system has several wants and several positive vices. While we meet fine types of primary teachers, they are so in spite of the system. The initial training is imperfect, the disadvantages many, the remuneration inadequate, the regulations and procedure of the unrepresentative education Board and some of its inspectors often

perplexing and vexatious, while the local clerical managers on their own part too frequently try to keep the teachers in a state of semi-serfdom. Character in a primary teacher, or its development in pupils, is not as a rule encouraged. There is constant criticism or condemnation of one thing or another, or several things, in this curious, oft-patched, inharmonious, and still largely unserviceable system. The depth and extent of the religious teaching in numerous primary schools have been the subject of criticism and misgiving. Strangely enough, most Irish priests do surprisingly little in the way of teaching religion to the young.

Altogether much in Irish educational systems has not made for virile Christianity any more than for patriotism. Then the severe and rigid way in which Christianity has been preached in so many places has led to questioning, to estrangement from the Church, to indifference, to weariness, though often in these cases a lackadaisical conformity is maintained; the hold of ecclesiasticism, such as it is, is social, not intellectual or spiritual. At the same time while some of the disaffected think that, because the preaching and teaching are unnatural, religion itself is wrong, and grow indifferent or materialistic, others maintain a goodly sense of the spiritual, though they cannot harmonise it with the theology that is presented to them. However, the thought and candid criticism of late years have spread, amongst a proportion of such folk who read, a lively sense of the fact that cleric or theologian is not necessarily infallible—as the populace were encouraged to assume—and that it is quite possible to be spiritual, and a

part of the Church in the great sense, though at odds or at war with either clericalism or phases of theology. Laymen, in fact, have been exalting their philosophy and spiritualising their theology for themselves. Numerous cases have come within my own experience, while in the large correspondence which I received on the serial publication of *The Plough and the Cross* in 1909, and in kindred correspondence at various stages to the present time, the most interesting points are from correspondents far apart in locality and station, who declare they had long held such and such views—expressed by one or other of the characters—but assumed that they were each alone in the holding, or at any rate in a small minority. The views concerned a more spiritual, or a more active, or a more independent Christianity.

In numerous novels, biographies, and autobiographies we have read much about individual outgrowth of creeds, of the clash of soul and long-accepted theological explanations and formulæ. Intensity and pain of spirit are often in the story. Strangely enough I have known various Irishmen whose religious and theological conceptions have been revolutionised in the present century, and there has been no pain or stress whatever. They came easily and naturally into the new life and experience. They awoke, as it were, on a radiant morning to find the world and themselves re-made, a new magic in the meaning and march of soul and Nature. The priest had ceased to be dominant and all-important; he was indeed one avowedly more sacrificial in his service, more concerned with the unceasing illustration of a Way of Life than they, and, in so far as he lived up to the



spiritual and practical call of his Gospel, bound to find life a strange mixture of outer trial and inward peace ; a helper and a servant of souls ; but withal a brother pilgrim, a soul on a cyclic journey even as the least of themselves. For them old explanations had crumbled away ; they set aside old tales but remembered the truth embodied in the tales ; they became less and less theological and more and more religious.

The factors that conduced to these things were subtle and various. Some of those who have experienced the greatest changes declare frankly that the start and the stages are not clearly realisable, at least intellectually, even by themselves. The laws of the subjective and subconscious life elude sounding and summarising. The effects are more evident than the causes. It can be said that in some cases something in the developments suggests Gnosticism, neo-Platonism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Theosophy, esoteric Christianity, the esoteric Celticism of certain stories and poems, Hermetic philosophy—of course there is a sense in which they are all kindred. But that is no real, at any rate, no full explanation. Many would have changed and developed much as they did had these things never been expressed and preserved. The impulse and the light were in themselves. They had questioned, brooded, and thought in their own way, and then some, but not all of them, by different roads and at different times, came to the realisation of the fact that much of the East and not a little of the West had carried the questioning and the intuition to immeasurably farther stages, ages and cycles before them. After all it really meant that

all of them, ancients and moderns, had been trying to see, or had seen, from the soul's point of view.

Various Irish men and women have been students in these fields for twenty years and more. Through the poetry and prose of a few—the most remarkable of whom is Mr. George Russell ("A. E.")—who grew as mystics in the true sense rather than found a species of mixed psychism and mysticism in books and from societies, the theosophic influence, in the broad sense, has been considerable. The re-discovery and the far faring of sundry Celtic (or pre-Celtic) stories and lore meant a tilling and a flowering in soil long fallow. Publications like the *Irish Theosophist* and the *Internationalist* brought something of a new leaven in the later nineteenth century. Studies in Erigena and his neo-Platonism (rather than his scholasticism) affected others who in turn exerted no little influence. Theosophic societies, the Hermetic Society, and others, have greatly changed the trend and colour of lives in Dublin and elsewhere. Ireland gave several theosophists, such as William Quan Judge, to the general movement and mission. Of Judge and his individuality men in Dublin, not lightly given to eulogy, speak with enthusiasm and affection. In his later years, like other Irish theosophists, he was specially identified with the movement in America; and nowadays some of his old friends, and sundry other folk in Dublin and the country, genial and strenuous types many of them, are linked with the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society whose centre is at Point Loma in California, under the leadership of Madame Tingley. Dublin has its Irish Theosophical Society, and Mrs. Annie Besant's

organisation has its connections there and elsewhere. Other Dublin bodies may in a general way be described as theosophic. The Dublin fellowship of the widest scope and interest in my experience is the Hermetic Society, whose president is "A. E." Adherents of very varied creeds are present at the larger meetings. The Book of its proceedings, conversations, speculations, and surveys would be a fascinating medley of luminous mysticism, high-hearted humanity, and lightsome humour. It would give Ireland sufficient thought to go on with for about a century. The *Quest*, edited by Mr. G. R. S. Mead, author of the exhaustive studies in Gnosticism, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, and its peer in another order, *Thrice-Greatest Hermes*, &c., draws some of its ablest contributors from this body. In one or other of these societies we meet some active figures of both the agricultural co-operative movement and the Gaelic League, as well as several of the younger poets and prose-writers who in England are called "Celtic."

I had ample opportunity of realising something of the effect wrought on many, though they might differ from particular theories, by delightful evenings and confidences in this Dublin within Dublin. There was no danger, so far as some of us were concerned, that in our daily paths we would grow problem-vexed. The Gaelic League alone, with its urgent, constructive work, its spirit of comradeship, and the wealth of character with which it brought us into contact, would have kept us from that. But the more subjective and interior journeyings and broodings at centres like the Hermetic Society left a sense of spiritual romance. One's mind seemed to grow, to



become creative ; and a more subtle and secret self could watch the process and the unfolding with a sense at once of detachment and wonder. There were times when we came to realise in a dim yet alluring way what it meant to live and be conscious as souls, not as buffeted and more or less fretful bodies or personalities. "A. E." has pictured more than once the possibility of a time when men may have developed their spiritual selves so much that they can see as far and as wondrously in the super-sensible realm as they now see with the normal sight into the physical realm on a night of summer and starlight. We could understand the hope and the evolution.

It is exceedingly interesting to study the effect of various esoteric ideas and theories on people who have no connection with any of the societies even as visitors, but who have come within the influence of the new currents. They fascinate some, they alarm others, they influence more who affect to resist them but cannot away from their consideration. They have meant the infusion of a more spiritual and mystical element into the theology of Catholics and Protestants who have frankly faced them. The mystic doctrine of the Logos, of which official Irish Catholicism has practically nothing to say nowadays, the divinity of the real man, and—in obvious relation to both—the spirituality, philosophy, and morality of great religions long anterior to historical Christianity, are truths and facts of which we have heard much. But no single doctrine has caused more discussion, or fared farther, than that of re-incarnation or re-embodiment. It is of course bound up with several others, but it seems to prove more of an inspiration

—or a storm-centre—than any of them. Where it is accepted, in its philosophical and spiritual essence, revolution follows. Many confound it at first with transmigration of souls, and necessarily those who consider their habitual selves as their real selves—who cannot imagine themselves as souls acting through a temporary personality—fail to grasp its bearing. This in my experience is more common amongst Irish women than Irish men, though to other Irish women it is a very definite article of belief or faith. Some objectors have been much embarrassed by the information that it was held by the early Christians—they grow restive nowadays at the name of Origen. Others are horrified at the notion of further trial-lives on earth, but would gladly reconcile themselves to the thought of re-embodiment and progression in other spheres or states. The doctrine of course was accepted in early Ireland, though Dr. Hyde and Professor MacNeill, on curiously inconclusive evidence, incline to the view that it was not general. For various people who have come under the spell of the Gaelic idea it has a great attraction. The thought that their real selves worked through bygone personalities and bodies in a far-off Gaelic civilisation, and that their present enthusiasm means the stir and response of something stored from the past in higher and permanent reaches of their being, proves attractive. When more matter-of-fact people call this a picturesque fancy-flourish, they are reminded that conventional notions, like those of the horned Devil, the unending material Hell, and so on, have not even the merit of being picturesque, and are certainly not philosophic. However, the majority of those con-

cerned work steadily and are content to let theories come afterwards.

It may be thought by some readers that Mr. W. B. Yeats is a moving power in those subtle fields. He is not, and has not been in or of them for some years. While the really beautiful work he has done is appreciated, and his influence in several directions unreservedly admitted, his mysticism is taken somewhat airily, not a little of it treated as puzzling if picturesque manufacture. Piquant stories are told of his achievements in the early years of the theosophic movement in Dublin. The son of a once famous Orange politician had been attracted to mystical philosophy and study, and in due course published translations of some of the Upanishads. He had a fine faculty of exposition, and on the evenings he set apart for expounding esoteric ideas his rooms were a favourite centre for great college and other worthies who on these things had open and inquiring minds. But as he warmed to the work Mr. Yeats would arrive, accompanied by his wondrous cloudland. He would break in on a fascinating dissertation to give his own explanation of how the ancient wisdom was preserved and transmitted to men. On the summit of one of the snowy Himalayas sat the brooding seers down the ages till their ever-lengthening beards, in which the Asian birds built their nests in peace, well-nigh reached the base. To a neighbouring crest came Madame Blavatsky, sat her down and waited, like "grey-haired Saturn quiet as a stone," till the sages were moved to murmur little or much of what their souls knew. Thus he would go on and on, uttering the wildest fantasy with music and emotion and



solemnity of conviction, till—it was no use for host or audience to think of getting within leagues of serious discussion or reality. On another occasion in an interesting haunt he agreed to work a little magic, to call spirits from the vasty deep or something kindred. He demanded a glass of water and a sword. The glass of water was easy, but the sword was the crux. Alack, there was no sword, but a would-be obliging individual produced a saw. Mr. Yeats waved it away with fine scorn. Even a wonder-worker must respect appearances, and obviously in such a situation a saw is not exactly dignified. There were some anxious moments, but at last an old soldier in the neighbourhood was remembered, and he was able to lend a bayonet. The bayonet, unlike the saw, passed muster. Then the passes, signs, summonings, and all the modern magic began. But what presences really manifested themselves the audience never knew, for rising into sheer and whirling ecstasy, the poet and wonder-worker began to slash on all sides with the bayonet, and with shrill screams and laughter the auditors dashed helter-skelter from their places and took fearful refuge under a large table till the worst was over.

Even mystics tell such stories with gusto, in which, however, there is always a certain airy friendliness. They have no use for such magic arts. Like the modern Ireland that counts, and like Mr. Yeats himself in his really memorable moments, they believe in the magic that springs from illumined mind and awakened will.

## CHAPTER XVI

### IRELAND AND MODERNISM

MUCH of what I have written under "Materialism and Mysticism" applies exactly to the case of the majority of Irish lay folk—so far as I know them—who may be described by the infelicitous term "Modernists." They became Modernists without knowing it; they were not greatly influenced in the process by philosophers or philosophies; the change began in themselves; they simply outgrew the crudity and formalism of so much Irish Catholic theology as—unfortunately—it is popularly preached. The spirit stirred and the hard, harsh letter passed away. Some of them have now fared farther than notable avowed Modernists themselves; their position would be more accurately described as theosophic, or Christian in a more or less esoteric sense, some would say. I have not known or heard of any who passed over to Protestantism. Nor, on the other hand, have I known of any Protestant more or less similarly placed who accepted Catholicism as popularly preached, or even philosophically presented. The path in either case is towards mysticism or theosophy. Unfortunately both these terms have been sadly misapplied in latter years in some quarters, but, taken in the old and long accepted sense, the position is made tolerably clear.

Candid Irish priests, young men mainly, who would

not actually class themselves as Modernists, have admitted for years that the Church in Ireland was in the way of losing thousands of the rising laity. They did not mean by this that episcopal or clerical autocracy would drive them away or render them indifferent. They had hopes that, possibly after misunderstandings and struggles, this trouble would pass, and there would come a clear and tolerant understanding of the respective rights of clergy and laity in Church and state. The difficulty went far deeper. The way in which Catholicism was frequently preached and presented in Ireland was deplorable or forbidding. How to deal with that was the really serious problem. "Too much formalism," said one; "insistence on an officialism that Churchmen have had to abandon outside Ireland," said another; "giving the foolish and false impression that the Church is an intellectual despotism," said a third; "a disastrous neglect to spread Catholic philosophy, to expound the philosophic basis of Catholicism," and so on. I give points and views that I have heard, some of them again and again, in the last ten years. All the speakers admitted the need for revision or even revolution of old explanations, the popularising of Catholic philosophy, the recognition of the fact that the preservation of Catholicism in Ireland could not continue to depend on an imperfectly educated priesthood and a semi-illiterate laity: there ought to be an educated priesthood and an educated laity; Ireland should be able to show Catholicity at its best, intellectually and socially, and not at its worst. These priests admitted at the same time that the bishops generally, and the great majority of the



clergy, had not the dimmest understanding of any such needs. In themselves they did not feel a call to the missions suggested, and they did not dream that they were needed. They were as much surprised at the suggestion as judges might be were they asked to go forth and teach law in attractive style to the multitude. To them the Church intellectually had come to mean a great caste apart, which indeed the multitude was privileged to approach and be given what was considered good for it. That the masses wanted more they could not be made to realise. They knew indeed that some presumptuous people demanded more scope and power in social and national affairs which Churchmen had long regulated and directed ; but these were obviously inspired by "anti-clerics." That young members of the laity had grown disturbed or curious over philosophical or theological issues, speculated for themselves on the deepest mysteries of life and the purport of the universe, or found subtle guides and teachers—this was simply unrealisable by their consciousness. Nevertheless it was a reality. The Modernist mood was abroad, as well as personalities to whom Modernism was more definite than a mood. It came within my own experience from both the lay and the clerical quarters.

However, a good deal of it only arose incidentally or indirectly in the clash with conservative ecclesiastics over national, educational, or social issues, and part of it would scarcely be described as Modernism outside Ireland. The progressive clerical view, often expressed in our columns, that Churchmen were not the Church, that they might, and did, prove painfully

fallible though the "Church" herself (of course in a subtle spiritual sense) was always right, that one might quarrel with every priest and bishop in Ireland and still remain a loyal member of (the mystic body or spiritual organism called) the Church—this to other clerics was sheer Modernism. In the struggle with ultramontaniam, repressive ecclesiasticism, and clerical formalism generally, points from Newman's "Letter to the Duke of Norfolk" on Papal Infallibility were quoted in our pages and proved exceedingly serviceable, but some of them—such as the declaration that the Pope had no power or authority over the conscience of any Catholic, that if the Pope ordered one thing and conscience urged another, we would be bound to follow conscience—came also to be treated as Modernism. Even the reminder of what Newman regarded as too obvious to demand argument, the fact that sundry Papal excommunications had been wrong or unjustifiable was Modernistic heresy to some of our Irish pillars of ultramontaniam, while in late years Newman's general setting forth of the limitation of Papal infallibility, and indeed authority, was unacceptable and unbearable in the same quarters. Some of us sometimes urged in quiet, informal discussions that the trouble about infallibility would settle itself if ecclesiastics and laics would think more of Christianity as a Way of Life, would go on trying to apply it resolutely to everyday problems and existence, at the same time doing their utmost to cultivate and develop the best in their psychic and spiritual selves; eventually, after many generations or ages of such living and training, Christians would have developed so much divinity and

realised so much divine knowledge that they would be virtually infallible so far as the issues of our present planes were concerned ; at the same time they would have acquired so much gentleness and sweetness and real charity, and so ecstatic a sense of still more mystic planes and knowledge before them, that none of them would dream of coercing anybody else. But this also, to some minds, was Modernism. They believed that here and now not only has one order of ecclesiastics all the Truth, but must be regarded as practically infallible in the intellectual expression of any fact or phase of that truth at any and every stage. Some of course would not go so far ; they would say that only the Head of the Church, speaking *ex cathedra*, was infallible. But in Ireland, as we often pointed out, we were expected in practice to accept a doctrine of episcopal and clerical infallibility in theological, or even in secular, affairs. As to the broader puzzle arising from the fact that Popes had differed from Popes, and that the Church had not always taught quite the same things, the answering was subtle and intricate. It might perhaps be thus summed up : the Church (some said Churchmen only) might be fallible or uncertain in time but was eternally right. And as this seemed to bring us back from the visible, the intellectual, the working Church, to a Johannic or esoteric or theosophic conception of the Church, the problem grew too subtle for mere discussion there and then.

All the same I heard much Modernism of a more definite and everyday order. Fascinating disquisitions on the Light that enlighteneth every man would be followed by vivid pictures of the alarm and con-



fusion of the older and conservative Vatican ecclesiastics who were trying to force the Pope's hand against the Modernising reformers—this was before the issue of the Encyclical—and the pictures would lead to the bold (lay) proposal that Irish Modernists should enter into communion with the Greek Church when Rome had driven them forth from her fold. Friends treated this scheme with a certain levity. "Why not an independent Irish Church?" some said. A Protestant Canon and others had urged in the *Peasant* that various Catholics and Protestants might well be content to call themselves Celtic Christians, and of course emulate the spirit and independence of Celtic Christianity in its finest ages. Certain Catholic clerics were now attracted and fascinated by phases of Modernism, anon fearful that the leaders would prove impulsive and imprudent. A Maynooth contributor to the *Peasant* underwent curious experiences. In July 1907 he was critical over some things in Modernism, enthusiastic about others. "There are," he said, "in the writings of Father Tyrrell especially, some philosophic passages which appeal to the religious consciousness with the clearness of a trumpet call. Dr. Hogan and Dr. Coghlan [not exactly advanced Maynooth men] would, we are sure, be among the foremost in lauding the many admitted excellences of the Immanentists. Father Tyrrell's writings are not all gold; neither are they all dross. . . . Dr. Coghlan is certainly doing one man's part towards refining from out the bullion the pure ore." In August he thought that the Immanentistic hypothesis might "furnish a clue to the correct theory concerning the evolution of religion." Having read

the Encyclical against Modernism, he wrote thus in our issue of October 5 :—

“The Immanentistic system cannot fail to derive considerable benefit from the pruning to which it has been officially subjected. We yield to no man in our admiration for the leaders of the great religious movement which to-day everywhere vitalises the Church. But when the liberty of the prophets was degenerating into licence a little comb-cutting was advisable. How imperative it was on the Holy Office to take active measures may be judged from the last error condemned in the Syllabus : ‘Modern Catholicity can be reconciled with true science only by transforming it into non-dogmatic Christianity, that is, into a broad and liberal Protestantism’—which bangeth Banagher.” The latter phrase, a little colloquial for a Maynooth man, especially when dealing with Rome and Modernism, was in allusion to the country saying : “That beats (or bangs) Banagher, and Banagher beats the Devil.”

The judgment challenged that picturesque personality, Uilliam Mac Giolla Bríde, the Hon. William Gibson, Lord Ashbourne’s heir, and he wrote the following week :—

“Your contributor . . . gives your readers to understand that the document was badly needed. Now it is certain that some of the propositions condemned would deserve condemnation if put forward by any sane man, but it is no less certain that the Syllabus, as a whole, cannot be described as giving ground for an equally clear explanation. Many of the positions there taken up would not be understood outside the schools, and some of the condemnations

are calculated to have a rather peculiar effect on the public mind. Poor Cardinal Newman, for instance, comes in for some rough handling. The proposition, for example, that 'the certitude which precedes faith is based on an accumulation of probabilities,' is fundamental in Newman's philosophy, and it is condemned. So also is the idea of the development of doctrine, as Newman held it. I do not mean that the late Cardinal went the whole length of some of the positions that have been taken up, but he went further than is allowed by the recent Syllabus and Encyclical. I may add that his statements about conscience in the famous 'Letter to the Duke of Norfolk' can no longer be held by those who wish to bring themselves into agreement with the Holy Father.

"But it is not only in the case of Newman that the issue of these documents may result in curious situations. Pius X. assumes throughout that there is some kind of identity between the apologetic of the Church schools and the apologetic which reaches actual minds in the outside world. Minds, that is to say, with which it is necessary *really* to reason about the foundations of things. Now the present writer has had much experience in this matter, and he does not remember ever to have met a case in which an effective appeal has been made by the scholastic method of reasoning. He has known those who have swallowed the scholastic system, with other things, in receiving the faith, but he has never seen it applied successfully, previous to that reception, as a method of persuasion.

"The fact is that the scholastic training of the clergy does not seem to be intended for serious out-



side use. Occasionally the results of it appear in public, and, as often as not, they give scandal to the uninitiated. But it is obvious that this form of education is intended, chiefly, as a preparation for the purely professional details of the clerical career. Like the rules of a trades union, or the apron of a Freemason, it tends to mark off the clergyman from his fellow-men.

“To those who may be troubled by the recent gift from the Vatican, I may remark that the most extreme exponent of the ultramontane point of view would hardly dream of applying to these utterances the sanction of infallibility, and that, if he did, his position could not be sustained historically. Consequently, neither the accuracy nor the orthodoxy of the documents is guaranteed. There may be heresies in them, and in that case they will end in condemnation by the Church.”

Our Maynooth friend did not reply directly or ostensibly to Mr. Gibson, but in the course of an article in our succeeding issue he returned to the question of the Vatican and Modernism, and illustrated his own way of walking back from his difficulty :—

“Of course, neither Syllabus nor Encyclical is an infallible utterance. This we have on the authority of a learned Canonist. But henceforward for all loyal Catholics Immanentism is but a memory. Of course, what is not infallible may be erroneous. But paternal authority is never infallible, and yet is to be obeyed, though at the moment we cannot very well see the wisdom of the mandate. The outrageous terminology of many Modernists and the admittedly

pernicious doctrines of others disturbed the atmospheric conditions, and this bolt from the blue is the result. Immanentists may rest assured that whatever of truth was in their system will be in time assimilated by the guardian of all truth. Contumacy on the part of the former supporters of the condemned system is the very best method of unduly delaying the process of assimilation."

In the same article the writer referred to Neo-Scholasticism, apropos a Maynooth man's translation of Dr. De Wulf's introduction to scholastic philosophy, *Scholasticism Old and New*. Apparently in order to give Mr. Gibson hope he quoted Dr. De Wulf: "The new scholasticism must be able to fit in with all the advances made, and must open wide its arms to all the rich fruits of modern culture." Mr. Gibson, and others, were not made hopeful.

By the way, in the Ireland that is coming to herself and doing things Mr. Gibson is easily the most picturesque, the most social, and yet in some respects the most elusive individuality. In his Gaelic garb he goes everywhere. He is the Happy Traveller and philosophic enthusiast of Gaeldom. He tours urban and rural Ireland delightedly, from club to cabin, from Feis to farm, from the haunts of theologians to United Irish League platforms, on some mysterious principle of his own. One never quite knows where he will re-appear next. And his Irish orbit is one within a larger orbit, which takes him through Wales, London, Paris, Rome, &c. Mentally and philosophically his travels have also been varied. Educated at Harrow, Trinity College (Dublin), and Oxford, he

mastered the Positivist philosophy of Comte at T.C.D., and went with it to Oxford, where he joined the Catholic Church, having recognised in it the natural outcome of this line of thought. In 1896 he published *The Abbé de Lamennais and the Liberal Catholic Movement in France*. In 1898-99 he took part in the discussions in Rouen, Paris, and London apropos the condemnation of "Americanism" by Leo XIII., and in May 1899 he contributed to the *Nineteenth Century* an article entitled "An Outburst of Activity in the Roman Congregations," which led to bitter attacks upon him in the *Civiltà Cattolica* and elsewhere. In the same period he translated *Plato and Darwin* by the Abbé M. Hebert, and wrote a philosophical introduction to it. It is a short dialogue setting forth one side of the French Liberal Catholic position. The condemnation of Dr. Mivart made it difficult for him for the moment to continue in this line of activity, and he turned his attention to the Irish language movement. He came to the conclusion that Liberal Catholicism would be impossible in these countries so long as the Catholic people were wanting in self-respect and national individuality. This line of thought gradually led him to realise all the force and possibilities of the Irish language revival. He was then much in London. About the same time Mr. George Moore, also in London, heard something of home developments, and was drawn for a different reason to the Irish movement. Mr. Moore proclaimed the fact to the world but did not learn Irish; Mr. Gibson said nothing to the world but learned Irish. The condemnation of his friend the Abbé Loisly sent him once more to the realm of



historico-theological discussion. He writes much in the French press, and has published one book in French, *L'Eglise libre dans l'Etat libre* (Paris, 1907). When the storm created by the Papal Encyclical against Modernism had subsided his ardour in the cause seemed to wane ; eventually to all appearance he made friends with the Vatican, and gave more of his thought and energy to Ireland. He was eager and active during the University struggle ; for years he has been one of the most zealous members of the Gaelic League executive. He is on the whole the most remarkable type of the Irishman who, long engaged in other and far different activities, has been attracted and re-moulded mentally by the spell of the newer Ireland. For some years a number of our ecclesiastics looked upon him with a certain suspicion and awe, but his serene humanity gradually calmed many fears and softened sundry prejudices. He is loved of the masses ; he looks and speaks like a chief of other times. He has taken a cottage in remote Clochaneely, in Donegal, near the haunt of the Gaelic College already referred to, and there he retires when he has had overmuch of Dublin, London, Paris, Rome, and elsewhere, and desires to brood over his bearings in the social and spiritual universe.

During the years of the University battle we heard less of Modernism, but the mood was there ; books like Father Tyrrell's *Mediævalism* passed round amongst young laymen, and clericalism and scholasticism were met and questioned at various stages. Few things ever printed in the *Irish Nation* caused more resentment amongst conservative and even moderate clerics than an article at the time of Father

Tyrrell's death. By way of illustration I may here give the brief opening paragraph :—

“ The death of Father Tyrrell removes an able and devoted Irishman but little known to the masses in his own land, though his influence on some minds in Ireland — Maynooth included — was considerable. Those who have read any of his penetrative and reverent books will readily understand the secret and scope of the influence. At first sight the non-ecclesiastical mind is puzzled at the idea of the term ‘ Modernist ’ being applied to a man like Father Tyrrell, for he seems palpably to express the spirit of the old and enlightened Catholicism ; there is nothing new-fangled about it ; the underlying essence appears to be as old as the Gospel. He passes away in the year that saw the beatification of Joan of Arc, who was condemned and burned as a heretic in the Middle Ages. Possibly after the lapse of a few hundred years the world may witness a similarly revolutionary justification of Father Tyrrell.”

The remainder of the article was mainly an illustration of Father Tyrrell's faith and philosophy, as shown in *A Much-Abused Letter* and *Mediævalism*, for the most part. It may not seem very revolutionary procedure, but it was described in public and private as showing the hand of the “ enemy of the Church.”

One further illustration of the meeting of the more or less conservative spirit and the inquiring or modern spirit in the Irish Catholic world will suffice. At the meeting of the Maynooth Union in 1910 the Rev. P. MacSweeney, M.A., who had edited a noted Irish tale for the Irish Texts Society, dealt with neo-Catholic movements in literature, and had a com-

paratively good word to say for the "pagan world" at the outset :—

"The literature of primitive Christianity was confronted with a pagan literature of supreme excellence. The one reached excellence by the intensity of the spiritual conviction which it embodied ; the other by its profound feeling for the beauty of Nature and of Humanity. The antagonism between them lay not in anything that was literary, but in the fact that one presented a solution of the mystery that enshrouds the world compared with which that which the other presented pales into insignificance."

The *Irish Nation* wondered if candid specialists would admit that there was any such striking contrast. Was there not "intensity of spiritual conviction" in Hellenistic theology, before the Christian Era, and in the first century of the Christian Era ? The doctrine of the Logos, or Creative Word, for instance, received profound exposition amongst the Greeks of Alexandria, as could be seen from Philo and other sources. Did not early and famous Christian authorities appeal to long and ancient tradition to show that they taught nothing essentially new, that Christianity was, so to say, a great restatement, not an innovation ? Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and others might be appealed to on this point. Was not much in the Pauline epistles themselves reminiscent of a far older world ?

To questions like these, asked of course not in a controversial but an interested spirit consequent on studies and reveries that had given a new colour and largeness to numerous lives, none of our clerical contributors would reply, even over pen-names. They



wrote on various questions concerning Church and State, from clerical school management at home to "Le Sillon" abroad, siding with lay contributors or criticising their positions. They would discuss the duties of Churchmen to the new age; they were ready to admit that Irish Catholicity as a whole had need of much spiritualising and of a generous infusion of the missionary social spirit. But apart from the realm and the bearings of historical Christianity, they were timid or uninterested. Seminary and ecclesiastical college had defined the universe and mankind and their individual selves in a certain strict and limited way, and they could scarcely conceive the possibility of a deeper or wider diagnosis. Of ancient mystical realms or modern psychic discoveries they were scarcely cognisant. (Ireland's main authority on psychical research is a Protestant.—Professor Barrett, late of the College of Science.) From questions that lay friends found fascinating, questions bearing on the divinity of "pagan" creeds, ideals, and teachers; from a spiritual or idealistic philosophy of an evolving, ever-creative universe; from the theory of an involutionary and evolutionary religious progression in which Christianity is one sequent part in a great whole—from all these they shrank in public, and, with few exceptions, in private, save in rare expansive moments. It was difficult to discover what those priests in general made of Christian mysticism, what they understood, intellectually or intuitively, by the "Logos," or by "Redemption," or by the teaching of their own Aquinas that the Incarnation ever goes on—the "Via ad Deum"—or a hundred other truths. A declaration by an excep-

tional young priest, that not Modernism but mysticism in the true sense was the need, seemed pertinent.

However, all these questions and interests arose in days and nights when spirits were stirred and heartened by several others. They were but threads in a varied pattern. Anyway life is something richer and more mysterious than all its problems and questions ; even now we live on several planes. So when Modernists and anti-Modernists, Platonists and scholastics, debated, some of us were sometimes reminded of Mark Twain's point about the discovery of America. Mark said that there was nothing very troublesome or very wonderful about the achievement of Columbus. Just by setting out and keeping right on he was bound to discover America. He could not possibly miss it. So just by going on with life, at the highest possible state of consciousness, whether through one spell or a cyclic series, according to the different theories, we came nearer to Knowledge. And the stages of learning, even the elementary ones, had their own fascination.

## CHAPTER XVII

### EVOLUTION

I REFER in other pages to what some considered the undue attention devoted in the theatre and elsewhere to the peasantry. This question came before us in different ways, and it led to other questions on which young Ireland appears to be growing increasingly curious. A typical example or two will illustrate the position. Dr. Hyde in a lecture to the Students' National Literary Society, Dublin, in February 1910, put forward theories of folk-lore and kindred matters that were keenly discussed. He suggested at one stage that the folk-tales taken down from the lips of some peasant in his hut on a Connemara mountain-side give us the only possible clue we can have to the moral nature of the prehistoric inhabitants of Europe. Some of us considered that there are different as well as more subtle clues. Again, Dr. Hyde seemed to have no doubt that folk-fancy and folk-tales were at the bottom of all literature ; that they had laid the earliest germs of literature ; that from them had sprung the epic, the drama, and the novel. Some were puzzled to know why so much store was set by the folk-tales and so little by antique creations of which the Orphic Hymns, the Vedas, &c., were different types and survivals. Dr. Hyde, like our old friends the comparative mythologists, seemed to postulate a rude and primitive primeval world, of crude



and untutored fancies, and the gradual ascent of man from barbarism to what we know him in the fragment of earth-life we call history. It was urged in reply to this that it simply did not tally, for one thing, with the facts of history as they had begun to be seen by competent and candid investigators. The farther back we explored antique Egyptian story the higher were the evidences of civilisation, and on the other side of the world, delving in prehistoric America we found traces of a civilisation to which we could assign no beginning; as one archæologist had said, it seemed to have sprung, like Athena, fully armed. And what preceded the great American, Egyptian, Indian, and other civilisations? Again, on the evidence available it was, to say the least, just as legitimate to hold that folk-tales—like other backward and modest things in the world—were humble or degenerate descendants from great lore of long-past ages and races as that the greater had ascended from the less and the lowly. As “A. E.” had remarked, a folk-lore was the tail-end of a mythology. Yet this did not mean that there was not evolution, and evolution of a much vaster range than most latter-day evolutionists had dreamed; there might be cycles of ascent and descent within the greater cycles. As to folk-lore regarded as the degenerate and down-drifting descendant of far nobler lore we had plenty of evidence of similar lapses in history. The story of the treatment of truths in the great world-Scriptures themselves afforded instances. Compared with Paul or Valentinus or our own Johannes Scotus Erigena, and many more, Dr. Hyde’s Connemara peasant was one who had turned

his own theology into folk-lore, though of course his spiritual life might be of a high order. And to beings on higher planes the Pauls and Erigenas (as they were) might seem only a higher order of folklorists so far as their explanation of being and phenomena was concerned.

The discussion of these issues in the *Irish Nation* was a gentler edition of the discussions in private. In both spheres the debates gradually ranged farther and farther afield. One point emphasised was that some of the most ancient ideas of man's nature and destiny were amongst the very noblest of all, India and Egypt supplying a wealth of examples. Another was that even were it quite demonstrable—could we trace all the stages—that man in his earth-term had evolved step by step from nothing apparently higher than an animal-like form, we would be no clearer as to his real origin and essential nature. All we could say was that when the mysterious entity reached the plane of physical matter—the “fall into matter,” or one phase of it, of the old mystic books—he assumed a physical vesture with more or less of the animal vitality of that plane, was subject more or less to the new conditions and environment, but went on evolving, fulfilling his mysterious course and destiny. We could not conclude with any pretence of philosophy that he originated on that plane, was no more in essence than it, and fared no further than it. Like a visitor to Arctic wastes, who must clothe himself in new fashion, and endure trying conditions and in a sense an unsuitable life, we could not at all explain him if we looked merely to the vesture, the conditions, and the immediate environment.

And this led to the point that the modern evolution

theory was but fractional as compared with the ancient Oriental (and other) philosophy of man's nature and destiny. The modern theory only followed the outer man over the arc of a circle—the physical portion—and tried, as a rule, and of course vainly, to interpret everything in physical-plane or material terms : a proceeding on the futility of which Huxley himself had uttered a warning. The ancient intuitions and philosophies treated of the whole cycle, of involution and evolution. The Gnostics and the Christian mystics carried on the tradition in their own way.

On these issues as a whole clerical writers or apologists made no public pronouncements. The question of the civilisation or philosophy of the far distant past did not apparently attract them ; I doubt that many of them knew anything even of the light thrown in modern days upon Gnosticism. One or another would admit in private a deep interest in old Egyptian lore, or in Erigena, but any serious study of Hindu, or even old Celtic philosophy, appeared to be confined to lay elements. As to modern evolution theories, when directly challenged about them, a clerical controversialist or champion would step forward to illustrate in his own way the liberality of Maynooth. Thus one wrote in 1910 :—

“ I was present at the thesis for the Doctorate of one who is now a distinguished professor in Maynooth, and he calmly gave out before the Theological Faculty that a Catholic is free to accept the theory that man is descended (or has ascended, as H. Drummond would say) from the lower animals, his spiritual soul excepted.”

It was said in the *Irish Nation* that this did not



seem a felicitous way of expressing it ; that the seers and teachers of many ages, from the Aryans who thousands of years ago distinguished clearly between the body and the Dweller in the body, unfolded it much more philosophically. They would admit at once that the matter of which man's physical body is composed is the same as that of which the bodies of the lower animals are composed, but in a more advanced state of development. They dealt in exhaustive and subtle detail with the evolution of forms and the involution of essences over vast periods of "time." Man's psychic body or personality they saw as the result of another line and order of evolution than the physical. And so with higher elements—the foregoing was but the beginning of their subtle and fascinating philosophy (and intuition) of many-sided involution and evolution. To say that "Man" has either ascended or descended from the "lower animals" was to express a fragment of a truth with great crudeness. One would never expect so partial and unphilosophical a statement from a distinguished Maynooth man. And even he did not discuss the subject for the benefit of the public.

Generally speaking, official Maynooth seems in no hurry to deal with philosophical or psychical or mystical questions in which so much of the rising generation is interested. It wants to go on believing that Ireland consists, and will always consist, of an incurious Catholicism headed by a professional Catholicism.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CLERICS AS CREATORS OF FOLK-LORE

MANY of the Irish Catholic clergy are religious folklorists. Theologically they live and breathe in a folk-lore atmosphere, and much of Catholicism and Church history they have turned into folk-lore pure and simple. Even priests addressing fairly well-educated congregations adopt the folk-lore habit and attitude. This is a subject on which candid and progressive priests betray both concern and hesitancy. They deplore the position and all it implies, but the thing and the tradition have gone so far that they fear any decisive handling of the evil would have a ruinous effect on the mind of the populace. For thousands of the people by this time cannot distinguish between the folk-lore and essential Catholicism, between moonshine and reality. So the would-be reforming clerics feel that they must walk warily and delicately, and certainly they do so; it is mostly in conversations with kindred spirits, or (to a less extent) in a study (concerning "Lives of the Saints," for example), in an expensive ecclesiastical publication, like the *Irish Theological Quarterly*, that they open their minds.

Several of them would like to grapple with what is known as the cult of St. Anthony. "I hope you don't believe in this St. Anthony nonsense," said a Meath priest to me at an early stage of the Boyne Valley period, and he proceeded to relieve his feelings

in expressive fashion on the subject. St. Anthony, as he and others said, had become well-nigh the central, most immediate figure, or at least intercessor, in the Christian vision of great numbers in Ireland. People prayed and made offerings to St. Anthony in the hope of gaining most varied ends, some of them very worldly. Various Irish Catholics describe it bluntly as a scandal; the simple-minded call it simple faith.

Far wider, more extraordinary, and more destructive of true spirituality is the folk-lore conception of St. Patrick. From this even learned, Irish-minded priests find it difficult to get away. The sermons, discourses, and books on St. Patrick in Irish are on the whole very little better than those in English. St. Patrick has been made a sort of magician. He found a crude heathen Ireland, with demons, serpents, fantastic if powerful druids, a populace worshipping sticks and stones, no spirituality and of course not a trace of philosophy in the land. He went from wonder to wonder, he conquered all before him, he made conversions to Christianity right and left, and when "pagans" were unusually obdurate he caused the ground to open and swallow them, or set them to sleep for a year, or adopted some other rough-and-ready illustration of the marvellous. Sometimes the order is not quite so fantastic, but it is nearly always highly-coloured and crude, with nothing really spiritual or apostolic about it. The romantic and dramatic story of Patrick and the druids at Tara is taken as seriously as Genesis. Incidentally we are told with the utmost naïveté how the apostle illustrated the idea or doctrine of the Trinity, to the confusion of the druids, by taking up



a shamrock and pointing to its three leaves. Tara was a royal city, and if we can assume that shamrocks grew therein the difficulty remains that the shamrock is no illustration of the Trinity, and in any case this very ancient idea must have been familiar to the druids unless they had much degenerated and forgotten most of their lore and philosophy by the fifth century. In the romantic tale itself, curiously enough, they are represented as exceedingly wise and powerful. All the fantasy about Patrick that prevails in clerical and rural Ireland were long to tell. The people are given an impossible picture of Ireland and her destiny before his arrival, and he and his work are deprived of all human interest and spiritual inspiration. For if he were one who could work wonders as he willed, and strike or startle rather than appeal to soul and intellect—in other words if he were not one who had developed his own divinity and could appeal to the latent divinity in his hearers—his relation to our plane and our problems is far to seek. But to doubt the wildest and crudest mediæval legends about Patrick is regarded by the older Irish clerics as unholy scepticism and other things. Men of high abilities and acumen adopt this extraordinary attitude, as was brought home to me acutely on more than one occasion. Some ten years ago in reviewing in the *Dublin Leader* a quaint little bi-lingual book on St. Patrick by a Redemptorist Father, I ventured to suggest that it was time to leave the cloudy Patrick of legend and come to the real human worker who was much more inspiring and interesting. This moved Canon O'Leary, the most popular of Irish writers, to pen a delightful but deadly earnest diatribe

entitled "The Sceptic." When I urged him to answer a few questions regarding the sources and so on of the wild fiction which he believed had been handed down as solemn and sacred truth from the fifth century—there was silence. The discussion, such as it was, took place on the eve of the annual Gaelic festival in Dublin, and at the evening musters there was a deal of genial discussion amongst laics and clerics on the whole question, opinion being very oddly and decidedly divided. The discussion was often afterwards renewed. In our early Boyne Valley days quite a sensation was caused locally by an *Irish Peasant* leaderette on a Patrician sermon delivered by the rev. President of the Meath Diocesan Seminary. Friendly priests told me of the consternation of old and grave Churchmen, but local laity seemed greatly to enjoy the notion of ecclesiastics being questioned by a lay voice on what was more or less their own ground. "Well, well," said a shopkeeper to one of the town priests, "if ye don't know the truth about St. Patrick, what *do* ye know?" Yet the comment was very gentle. By way of illustrating what the older Meath priests regarded as dangerous to faith and authority a few typical sentences may be quoted:—

"The conventional account of St. Patrick represents him as a sort of folk-lore hero. Obviously that destroys the grand and touching reality of St. Patrick's life, and how the idea persists, in spite of St. Patrick's own account of his sufferings and labours and trials, we know not. Father Flynn, in the eloquent sermon last Sunday reported elsewhere, went farther than any eulogist we have yet heard or read,

giving a picture of St. Patrick's progress full of poetry and colour, yet one not nearly so impressive to our minds as the toiling, suffering, sore-beset St. Patrick of the realists. Father Flynn assumes, by the way, that the Ireland to which St. Patrick came was a place of ignorance, bondage, and idol-worship of a commonplace character. In view of what modern scholarship has revealed as to pre-Patrician civilisation this is strange enough as a beginning. Turning then to the saint's mission in Ireland he sees in it a triumphal progress, all Ireland Christianised at the close. But St. Patrick's difficulties in Ireland were enormous, his sufferings were intense, and he was very far from succeeding in converting Ireland generally. He has left it on record that his life had been endangered twelve times, that he was often robbed and plundered, that he was once bound in fetters for fourteen days, and that in the late period when he wrote his *Confession* he was living in poverty and misery. We do not often differ from idealists, but to us the poetic story of St. Patrick's triumphal progress obscures the real drama of his life, with its heroic courage and noble endurance."

We had a good deal of amiable battling about St. Patrick and kindred questions at stage after stage. It meant more than it seems. Some of us saw, and young priests agreed with us more or less, that Catholic clerics generally gave the people an untenable theory of Irish history, picturing a barbarous people suddenly and strangely accepting Catholicism and ever afterwards destined to suffer and strive for its spreading far afield. They saw something providential in the whole tragedy of Irish



emigration—the unfortunate, untrained, often uneducated emigrants passed, in their view, to spread the faith in distant lands, to spiritualise people who would smile at their philosophy of life. Strangely enough, those emigrants, avowedly destined to convert and inspire the strangers, were not helped to any modern means of culture before going abroad—natural education was not theirs, and where they had something of it even free libraries were often denied them. Ecclesiastics living in a cloudland would let the historic Irish nation go to pieces for the sake of an illusion. Some of the theories were well-nigh incredible. At the Irish Catholic Truth Society's Conference in October 1906 a Connacht bishop spoke with burning eloquence of Ireland's mission to the heathen. "Standing on her sea-girt rock she held aloft the cross of faith in one hand and the torch of science in the other." In reference to this the *Irish Peasant* said that we had as high an ideal of Ireland as anybody living, but the last thing on earth we could honestly claim for her was that she held aloft the torch of science; if she really did we devoutly wished that she would turn it now and then on her own children. The bishop went on to say that while other nations were straining every nerve to acquire wealth and were offering incense daily before the altar of Mammon, Ireland was satisfied if only she could send forth her missionaries to bear the light of faith to nations that sit in darkness and under the shadow of death. Mr. John Dillon reminded his lordship that Ireland had to build, develop, and foster a nation within her own shores. The *Irish Peasant* said it would be fairly well satis-

fied if Ireland could preserve an Irish character and develop a distinctive and fruitful life within her four seas.

Curiously enough the last number of the suppressed *Irish Peasant* contained a good deal about St. Patrick and incidentally a contemporary cleric, but all quite cordial and appreciative. It was a tribute to a fine piece of work by Father Dinneen—his edition of the Latin of Patrick's *Confession*, with Irish and English translations. When I met Father Dinneen in Dublin a little later he commented on the curious irony of a banned, "anti-clerical" organ going out with a tribute to an apostle and a priest. I jestingly reminded him of the Irish proverb, "Aithnigheann ciaróg ciaróg eile;" in this instance, one "anti-cleric" recognises another, for *he* had just proved himself an insidious anti-cleric. By publishing in popular form St. Patrick's own realistic and touching account of his sufferings and labours, he had gone far to destroy the great legend which bishops and priests had been building up for generations for the edification of the wondering Irish people. Father Dinneen laughed, but I warned him that even as he laughed there might be a letter from Cardinal Logue at his publisher's.

But it seems difficult for the older Irish priests to see Irish history steadily and see it whole. There would appear to be a "Roman magic" as well as a "Celtic magic." The most popular Irish author is a case in point. In 1907 Canon O'Leary, whose Irish prose as prose is attractive reading, published one of his longest contributions to Irish literature, the historical novel entitled *Niamh*. It deals with the later

tenth and early eleventh century, before and after the battle of Clontarf. It is charmingly written, but is largely a sort of Munster fairy-tale about Brian Boru, though sometimes told in the spirit of a Norse saga. There is much to say at an early stage about the mysterious disappearance of a beautiful chalice, which is declared to have come from Rome and to have been presented by Brian to a noted monastery in an isle of the Shannon. The mystery of the disappearance of the treasure occasions much anxiety to a Papal legate who is represented as visiting Brian and discussing with him the condition of Church and State in Ireland. He is made to aver that the Pope and all Europe are watching Brian and Ireland, and are profoundly grateful to him for holding the Norse in check, preventing them from establishing themselves in these islands, and being in a position thence to threaten and overrun all Europe. Here the fairy-tale becomes obviously extravagant. Europe had so many home excitements at the period that Ireland and her invaders could not keenly concern it. Still the Canon will have it that Brian—before he became Ard-Ri, or High-King, and years before Clontarf—was looked upon as the bulwark of Europe against the foe : which is airy, fairy fiction. At a dinner in Ceann Cora, Brian sounds a little bell and proposes the health of the Pope, which the company drinks, afterwards kneeling to receive the Pope's blessing from the legate. All this is manifestly modern. The particular year and the particular Pope are not mentioned—there were several Popes in the period covered by the tale—but Ireland's interest in the Pope and the Pope's trust in Ireland are lovingly emphasised. Of



course it is all a clerical dream. Canon O'Leary in his innocence does not seem to have given a thought to the condition of the Papacy in the tenth century—one of its darkest and unhappiest periods. The Popes who had time or inclination to think in those melancholy years were not likely to be concerned about our distant isle. These pages, typical of many latter-day assumptions and pronouncements, simply carry on the great illusion beloved by so many of our older Irish ecclesiastics.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the Rev. Dr. Turner, in a recent exhaustive article in the *Catholic World* of New York on the Celtic element in philosophy, emphasises the pre-Christian Celt's philosophic idealism and the ardent and even inveterate Platonism of the Celt after the coming of Christianity to Ireland. All this, of course, is in direct contradiction to the usual Irish clerical view. By the way, the date of the incised tumuli on the Boyne (New Grange or Brugh na Bóinne) was lately put by an expert like Mr. George Coffey in the second millennium B.C. These colossal monuments raise several fascinating considerations. They are amongst the indices of the past which make the theory of pre-Christian barbarism seem foolish.

## CHAPTER XIX

### DRUIDS INTERVENE

WHILE the conservative clerics in their sermons, discourses, magazines, and occasional books, carried on with lulling solemnity the fostering of the folk-lore idea of Irish history and destiny, very different Irish historical authorities were at work, and are still at work, at home and abroad. Mrs. J. R. Green, Professor Eoin MacNeill, Mr. H. E. Kenny ("Sean-Ghall"), and others, have already helped to change quite a number of conventional or traditional views. Apart from these I had evidence of the uprising of a more spiritual and esoteric conception of Celtic and later Irish factors and phases, a conception which embarrassed the older ecclesiastics, and though sometimes arresting was occasionally disturbing to a proportion of the more forward priests. It was strongly manifested in connection with such matters as the study of druids and druidism, and it was curious on occasion to note the mingled fascination and bewilderment amongst the more or less interested laity.

"The mystery of the Celt," said "A. E." in an early lecture, "is the mystery of Amergin the Druid. All Nature speaks through him. He is the confidant of her secrets. Her mountains have been more to him than a feeling. She has revealed them to him as the home of her brighter children, her heroes become immortal. For him her streams ripple with magical

life, and the light of day was once filled with more aerial rainbow wonder. Though thousands of years have passed since this mysterious Druid land was at its noonday, still this alliance of the soul of man and the soul of Nature more or less manifestly characterises the people of the isle. . . . What was the mysterious glamour of the Druid age? What meant the fires on the mountains, the rainbow glow of air, the magic life in water and earth, but that the Radiance of Deity was shining through our shadowy world, that it mingled with and was perceived along with the forms we know. . . . This idea of man's expansion into divinity, which is the highest teaching of every race, is one which shone like a star at the dawn of our Celtic history also. Hero after hero is called away by a voice ringing out of the Land of Eternal Youth [Tir na nOg of the Celtic stories], which is but a name for the soul of earth, the enchantress and mother of all."

Here some readers will recall a world of Oriental philosophy, and something of that of a modern like Fechner. In a good deal of everyday Irish life, especially in slum-poisoned and forlorn towns, or amongst folk obsessed by problems and cares, one might think "mysterious glamour" was a rather ironical poetic invention, and that the alliance of the soul of man and the soul of Nature was visionary. Yet on a hundred occasions, at the Gaelic festivals and otherwise, it all seemed a subtle reality. French and German students at the Gaelic colleges expressed a sense of it in their different ways, and I recall the wonderment of a Japanese visitor, who declared that in Ireland he felt in the presence of a very old and



far-evolved civilisation, while in England he had the feeling of being in a land which only lately had left crudity and young barbaric life. But this is by the way. We must return to our druids.

In sermons, lectures, and discussions they were much with us. The clergy had a cloudy or misty view of them. Sean O'Ceallaigh, an excellent writer of Irish, made a detailed study of the pictures and references in Irish traditions and tales, but he took monks and mediæval annalists too seriously. The monks through whose hands the older stories passed had little knowledge of essential druidism, even if they could have taken a detached and impartial view of the subject. They missed the significance of the symbolism, "magic," and other things associated with druidism. Sean, however, brought out the fact that druidic baptism survived the introduction of Christianity; indeed much in the real druidism long survived; druids and early Christians had apparently a good deal in common. Contributors to the *Irish Nation* pointed out that the religion of the druids at their height had the stamp of divine manliness about it—recognised the infallibility of the Higher Law, the inevitable reaping of that which has been sown, man's immortality and eternity in the past as well as in the future, his essential spiritual nature and that of the universe; it saw in an earth-life and the manifestation of a temporal personality (which was not the real Self or Higher Man) but one stage in the myriad stages of the cyclic course of involution and evolution.

In the autumn of 1910 I gave in our pages a story in Irish which bore directly on the whole fascinating

and perplexing question. Its purport was to illustrate what really happened when Patrick, or rather one of the missionary Patricks of whom Irish literature and tradition have to tell, arrived in Ireland. It was as far from the conventional clerical view as could well be imagined, and was judged accordingly—I heard a good deal of its effect in certain quarters where it was read or translated. I know that its main conclusions and philosophy (which have their own bearings on life in the twentieth century) are those of many in new Ireland, so a summary will serve an interpretative purpose and show incidentally that we do not lack boldness. I may explain, for the benefit of readers not well versed in Patrician lore and criticism, that Irish records tell of a Sean-Phad-raic, or Old Patrick, for much of whose work some authorities believe the traditional Patrick has got the credit. Others maintain that Patrick and the unsuccessful Roman missionary Palladius, were one and the same. In the story it is assumed that Old Patrick wrote the *Confession*, and was a simple-hearted, single-minded worker whom the druids could respect, though they thought his philosophy crude, and that Palladius-Patrick was a disturbing, narrow-minded innovator, one of the newer types of Christians—Roman rather than Greek—who had lost the early vision and spirit of Christianity. But the ideas in the story were the main point:—

On an autumn evening in the fifth century, Ciaran, a young student, leaves the royal city of Tara, walks along one of the main roads for a while, then turns suddenly and passes through the woods and fields towards the Boyne. Bennaid, the incidental heroine

of the story, watches him sadly as he goes forth and wonders at his growing unrest and distraction.

Ciaran soliloquises, as he goes towards the Boyne, over the trouble that has come in Tara and elsewhere. Already Tara is preparing for the great Feis, or assembly, of November, at which the burning question of the disturbing teaching of the missionary Palladius, in Leinster, is to be discussed. Ciaran thinks for the moment of paying a visit to his relative, Neachtan, but is not sure of the actual whereabouts of that learned chief and tireless traveller. Neachtan has seen much of the Continent and the East, is an adept in Gnostic and Neo-Platonist lore, and knows the *Bhagavad Gita* quite as well as the story of Cuchulainn. He is the author of a poem on a famous enchanted well, and of a treatise on the Salmon of Knowledge (in the Boyne), dwelling in each instance on the esoteric significance of the theme.

In point of fact Ciaran encounters Neachtan under the trees by the Boyne—Neachtan had desired to see his young relative and had sent a thought-messenger to him at Tara (if I may express it roughly and insufficiently).

After a talk on thought-transference and other things which, Neachtan says, are better understood in the East, Ciaran mentions his own great trouble, arising out of the clash of old faith and new.

Neachtan tells him that he is mistaken, that there is only one faith, one philosophy, and that such has ever been the case. When Ciaran expresses surprise and refers to the disputation between certain Christians and certain druids, Neachtan replies that they only dispute over names and rules, over history and



formula, but Truth and Soul remain as they ever were. He admits, however, that New Christians, like Palladius, are doing harm. They are not so well informed, wise, and spiritual as the first Christians who came to Eire a couple of hundred years earlier, nor indeed as the Christians as they had known them till lately. Much the same trouble has been growing on the Continent; most of the Christians have been losing the true philosophy and mysticism they originally possessed. But, adds Neachtan, there is no need to say more on the matter, as the issue will be fully considered during the Feis. He says further that he wishes all men would do their life-work faithfully and honestly, without any clash or controversy regarding things of the soul. Men cannot obtain real knowledge about the soul save when they are peaceful, charitable, thoughtful, looking deeply into themselves. Hermes, Buddha, Krishna, Iosa (Jesus), Paul, and all the great Teachers have impressed this truth on the race. Incidentally Neachtan explains that he has a special personal reason for desiring peace at this stage, as he wants to write a treatise on the ancient temples at Brugh na Boinne [New Grange, &c., on the north of the Boyne towards Drogheda] and their symbols. Friends in the East are keenly interested in the work.

At this point they hear people approaching. These prove to be special friends of Neachtan: Seoghach, "the Cheerful," and Art, "the Music-hearted," two of the most learned and famous sages of their day. Seoghach is a lively, brawny personage, intensely interested in farming, in poetry, in philosophy, in art, and in psychic study. His friend Art is a slender, thought-

ful man whose great passion is music, which brings him vision and intuition far above the possibility of intellectual presentation.

Neachtan explains the trouble of Ciaran between "old" faith and "new," and how he has been impressing upon him the fact that there is but one faith all the ages.

There is indeed but one Truth, says Seoghach, as they seat themselves by the river, but there is great difference in the development and perception of the world's peoples. So each sees a particular aspect of truth and moulds its philosophy accordingly. The Greeks realised it as beauty, the Romans as power, the Brahmins as metaphysics, the Buddhists as freedom from desire, the true disciples of Jesus as love or charity. Each is good, and there ought to be harmony amongst all, even as unity and friendship obtain amongst musicians and historians and men of the laws in Tara.

Art says it has ever been understood in Eire that there ought to be no contention concerning gods. It were as senseless as contention about souls. Many a race had come to the island since Atlantis sank, but in the course of time the gods of each race came to be appreciated by the people as a whole. Never was there fighting on account of creed till the neo-Christians came. He himself believes that the intense love of music in the people had ever been a blessing and a bond; the music brought a certain spiritual understanding and underlying unity.

Neachtan thinks it saddening that the neo-Christians are losing the early spirit and cordiality. Some are actually declaring that there is no truth but theirs.

An extraordinary change has come over them since the time of Origen, Clemens, &c.—these declared that Christianity was like every great creed that had been in the world before it. Which of course, intervenes Seoghach, was quite evident to anybody who knew much of the ancient world. Augustine had admitted the fact in the previous century. Every great Teacher's message was the same in essence, and there was a singular similarity in the careers of the Teachers themselves. All that is as clear as the water of the Boyne, whatever the neo-Christians may say.

Neachtan expresses his fear that the sages of Eire do not understand the new position, or the danger that is coming. They ever had such welcome for a philosophy, and were so cordial to the Christians for years that they think not there is cause for uneasiness. But the order has changed. The Christians on the Continent have been growing worldly, haughty, and fearless since the time of Constantine. Their leaders and clerics have come to set less store by sanctity and philosophy than by power and worldly riches. It is difficult to say what they have in view, but they are no friends at any rate.

What can they do against us? asks Seoghach. They are not heroes; they are not armed hosts. They cannot seize the kingdom. And it is not necessary to trouble about the strange philosophy they have nowadays, though some grow angry over what this new arrival, Palladius or Padraic, has to say. The philosophy of Old Padraic is curious enough, but he himself is honest and spiritual. His *Confession* is good in its own way. But this new Patrick! Sorrow, not



anger, he should occasion. Anybody who knows the early Christian teaching—that of Jesus, that of Paul—and the philosophy of such mystical books as the *Pistis Sophia*, must really pity Palladius.

They proceed to speak about the *Pistis Sophia* and kindred books. Ciaran listens wonderingly. It is evident that everything is crystal-clear to the trio, but Ciaran can make nothing of the discourse. They compare mystical books of the early Christians with many others of different lands and ages, but Ciaran understands no better. He thinks sadly that he will never understand the druid lore. He grows weary in the end. He hears words like “Logos,” “Pleroma,” “Atman,” “Theodidactoi,” and others still stranger. He dozes for a few moments, during which he has a wonderful dream. He thinks Bennaid is beside him on the brink of the Boyne, looking upon him lovingly. They are listening to the trio, and Ciaran understands every word! All is clear and simple. He awakes with a feeling of delight in his heart. The trio are talking eagerly and learnedly, but again he understands not a word. He arises suddenly, says good-bye, and goes back to Tara and Bennaid. There is a happy development, which does not concern our main track.

The next scene brings us to the Feis at Tara. There has been so much agitation and discussion throughout the land concerning the pretensions of the neo-Christians that many are uneasy as to temper and developments when the national assembly meets. But as ever when Gaels foregather they inevitably grow social and cordial. Chiefs and sages and scholars and artists are merged in the eager talkers

and enlivening friends. Neachtan declares that when the social fraternising is over, and the crucial business is reached—with Palladius himself to the fore—it will be the same story. The druids, by the way (in Irish, *Draoithe*), are not regarded as a caste but as specialists in all the learning of the age.

Laoghaire (Laera), the king, is heartsome, conciliatory, sweet-spoken, diplomatic as usual. But at heart he is anxious. He has feared for a long time that he will find it impossible to keep the peace between the established order and the neo-clerics. His private view is that the latter are rather unlearned, unsocial, and disloyal. But he likes the traits of Old Patrick and Christians of his kind, and he thinks that the neo-Christians may grow even as they. The Gaelic civilisation may soften and mould them—he has seen how Old Patrick has developed and mellowed under its influence and its spirit. Even so may be the progress of Palladius.

Palladius is present. Every one is kindly and friendly to him. But it is difficult to move or animate him. He is inclined to taciturnity and to testiness. He finds it impossible to sit still or listen at stage after stage; he rises and walks uneasily to and fro. His voice is musical when he is satisfied; it is like a scream (*sgreadach*) when he is excited. And this is often the order in the course of the Feis.

When the crucial matter is reached the king urges all to be considerate and calm. The question to be settled is simply: has Palladius been doing aught against the kingdom, the Gaelic order? It is best to leave matters of creed alone. Every one is free in this regard, and the sages have shown that the

primal facts, the guiding thoughts, of the great Teachers have been the same since the beginning of the world. The seeming differences arise from the different understanding and character of the believers. There are no root-differences, only differences of explanation. Ever in their island home there had been welcome for philosopher and philosophy, for teacher and teaching, for thinker and thought. There were Houses of Hospitality in every province (*cúige*), but strange indeed it were to have houses in which the wayfarer would find food and drink, had they not, so to say, their Houses of intellectual and spiritual Hospitality also.

And now discussion waxes keen. The Leinster chiefs are hard on Palladius. Some from Munster are inclined to take his side at first; they declare that the Christians and clerics long known in their region are as loyal and fraternal as other people. The Leinster men point out that there is a very great difference between Palladius and his co-workers and the Old Christians. The former have been saying that Irish habits and customs are worthless, that some of the people worship stones, that others adore the sun, though everybody ought to know that all visible things are symbolical, symbols of the unseen and the Real—as the druids said nobody ever beheld the Real Sun. Leinster chiefs say further that Palladius habitually ridicules the druids, though it is plain that he does not understand their real teaching or the essence of their philosophy; he tells quaint stories of imaginary feats he has performed against them; he boasts that he will drive the “serpents” out of Eire. This means, the chiefs maintain, that he desires to



destroy the Gaelic wisdom and philosophy, for the "serpent" habitually symbolises wisdom. All the philosophers, and those who raised the "serpent-mounds," understood that truth. According to Old Patrick himself Iosa had said, "Be ye wise as serpents."

The speakers declare that there is a conspiracy afoot, that Palladius is in league with imperial Roman authorities, that he is trying to deceive the people, to turn them from their own customs and beliefs so that eventually they would welcome the Romans and accept the rule of Rome.

Palladius rises excitedly and declares that he has no such dream. He has nothing to do with imperial Rome. He is only doing his best to preach the one Truth to the people and to bind them to the Church. It is time for them to be members of the Church. They have a portion of the Truth, but no more than a portion.

Seoghach arises and questions Palladius about the Truth. He asks him pointed things regarding Hermes, Pythagoras, Krishna, Buddha, and their disciples; he questions him on the ancient wisdom and the many civilisations. Palladius declares that he thinks little of it all; the old philosophers and teachers did not know the Truth. Astonishment comes over the druids. Seoghach refers to great phases of the philosophy of the East, of Egypt, of Greece, &c. Palladius admits that he is unlearned in these things, but cares not. The wonderment of the assembly increases.

Neachtan arises and shows that the early Christians were at one with the great philosophers of the past.

He illustrates this by statements of Paul, Clement, Origen, and others. Palladius answers that these, and the Greek Fathers generally, went astray at first. Many had now come to the conclusion that Origen and his kind were in a sense unchristian. They believed in re-incarnation and other things unacceptable to the leaders of the Church to-day.

Even the diplomatic and careful king cannot conceal his astonishment at this. Is it really possible, he asks, that Palladius and his brethren do not believe in re-incarnation and the kindred truths bound up with it? Most of them, Palladius says, do not believe therein, but the question has not yet been decided by the Church. But the world knows, says the surprised Laoghaire, that we have day and night, working and sleeping, and so on alternately, and in the same way we have the earth-life of the individual and the soul-state alternating, till his worldly work is done and he is fitted for a more spiritual plane. Without all this how did Palladius and his friends explain existence?

Palladius proceeds to explain, and is questioned from all sides, as nobody understands the explanation. He insists that the individual comes but once to earth, and after death goes to Heaven or Hell, to remain in the same state for ever. This, a chief interjects, would be as extraordinary as "life" consisting of only one day and one night. The chiefs generally now aver that the teaching of Palladius does not harmonise with the old wisdom, and does not even agree with the teaching of Old Patrick himself—he is at one with the druids in many things, though he is not so learned or so philosophical. One thing,

however, Old Patrick has made clearer to them : the law of love and charity.

At this Palladius grows angry, and asserts that the druids are on the side of the Devil, who was the prompter of the philosophers of old. It goes hard with the king to control the assembly. Many declare against permitting Palladius to go at will through the country henceforward. It is plain that he is an enemy of the Gaelic order, and would do untold damage, and set folk astray altogether. They lament the fact that he is not so simple-hearted as Old Patrick, now at work in the North. Palladius grows still more angry, declaring that Old Patrick is neither learned nor loyal to the Church, but the assembly refuses to listen to him. He leaves the gathering precipitately. Laoghaire sends a messenger to him, but he refuses to return. He goes from Tara that evening, and soon afterwards leaves the country.

In the opinion of certain chiefs and druids the neo-clerics as a whole ought to be banished, but the king is opposed strongly to such drastic action. He thinks it will be sufficient to send Old Patrick on a mission amongst them, to impress on them the fact that they must be prudent, helpful, and loyal like himself.

The king does not understand the neo-clerics, nor does he realise the nature of the new Christian power that is arising throughout the Roman Empire. Old Patrick himself understands the position just as little. Neachtan and others are more shrewd, but to no avail.

Neachtan meets Ciaran on the last day of the Feis, and in the course of the talk tells how uneasy in spirit he is even though Palladius disturbs the land no



more. Palladius is gone, but the neo-clerics and their schools remain, and soon or late if they can they will sap and destroy the old order. And if they and theirs succeed and get the upper hand in Eire, crude and paltry will be the story they will leave for after ages concerning the lore of the druids and the ways of the chiefs and workers before them. The further points of the chat do not concern us here.

All this, I need hardly say, is opposed root and branch to the general clerical theory of what obtained and happened when the new theological order met the old in Ireland. Whether all the underlying ideas are justifiable or not is not now the question. The point is that they are held by an increasing proportion of the new generation, though of course some who are called Gaels would not avowedly go so far; still they follow the conclusions with interest. And the conclusions challenge study and thought. If the great majority of our Catholic clerics—there are always exceptions—show a monstrous and impossible pre-Patrician Ireland, they have to reckon with those in their own fold and without who show a picturesque and a possible pre-Patrician Ireland.

In this connection a pertinent question has often been asked of late years. If things obtained and happened as the majority of the priests proclaim—if druidism had no philosophy or vision, and if the new teaching, so far as it was new, prevailed and permeated the country in the fifth and succeeding centuries, how are we to explain the neo-Platonism of Johannes Scotus Erigena in the ninth century? The weight of authority goes to show that he obtained

his early training in Irish schools. He certainly does not seem to fit in with the usual clerical theory. In Dublin during the past few years a good deal of attention has been devoted to Erigena, some studying the manuscripts in the National Library, some finding sufficient for their needs in works like the attractive *Studies in John the Scot*, by Miss Alice Gardner. Curiously enough, John Eglinton apart, the deepest first-hand student of Erigena that I have met was a young Irish priest. Erigena is "my favourite philosopher," said this *sagart*, writing in the *Peasant* in April 1907, and he proceeded to argue, in reply to a lay contributor, that although "like all philosophers and most theologians, he made mistakes," Erigena was always a true Catholic—a pointed example of the liberality and courage of some of the younger Irish priests.

## CHAPTER XX

### LITTERATEURS AND THE LAND

"I MOVED among men and places, and in living I learned the truth at last. I know I am a spirit, and that I went forth in old time from the Self-ancestral to labours yet unaccomplished; but filled ever and again with home-sickness I made these songs by the way."

"In day from some titanic past it seems  
As if a thread divine of memory runs;  
Born ere the Mighty One began his dreams,  
Or yet were stars and suns.

But here an iron will has fixed the bars;  
Forgetfulness falls on earth's myriad races;  
No image of the proud and morning stars  
Looks at us from their faces.

Yet yearning still to reach to those dim heights,  
Each dream remembered is a burning-glass,  
Where through to darkness from the Light of Lights  
Its rays in splendour pass."

"If nationality is to justify itself . . . it must be because the country which preserves its individuality does so with the profound conviction that its peculiar ideal is nobler than that which the cosmopolitan spirit suggests—that this ideal is so precious to it that its loss would be as the loss of the soul. . . . Nationality was never so strong in Ireland as at the present time. It is beginning to be felt less as a



political movement than as a spiritual force. It seems to be gathering itself together, joining men who were hostile before in a new intellectual fellowship: and if all these could unite on fundamentals, it would be possible in a generation to create a national ideal in Ireland, or rather to let that spirit incarnate fully which began among the ancient peoples, which has haunted the hearts and whispered a dim revelation of itself through the lips of the bards and peasant story-tellers. . . . We can see, as the ideal of Ireland grows from mind to mind, it tends to assume the character of a sacred land. . . . The last Celtic poet who has appeared shows the spiritual qualities of the first, when he writes of the grey rivers in their 'enraptured' wanderings, and when he sees in the jewelled bow which arches the heavens

“‘The Lord’s seven spirits that shine through the rain.’

“This mystical view of nature, peculiar to but one English poet, Wordsworth, is a national characteristic; and much in the Creation of the Ireland in the mind is already done, and only needs retelling by the new writers.”

“If we had not put our brains to sleep—the sleep of the well-fatted and comfortable hog—for the last quarter of a century, the Danes and others would never have had the courage to attack the Irish bacon-curing industry in the way they have done.”

These four quotations are from the writings of one man, whom we have met at earlier stages: Mr. George Russell (“A. E.”). The first is the preface

to his *Homeward: Songs by the Way*, the second is a poem from that volume, the third is from *Some Irish Essays*, the fourth is a note taken almost at random from the *Irish Homestead*, the organ of the agricultural co-operative movement, which Mr. Russell edits with unfailing zest and raciness—he maintains that it is the most cheerful paper in Ireland, possibly even in the world. Some readers, impressed by the spirit and beauty of the first, second, and third quotations, may experience a little shock at the fourth, but it is not really out of harmony with the others, and anyhow it is very like Mr. Russell. He has a broad and bracing ideal of the Hero in Man, including Irish farming man, and he knows that no one can be much of a hero if he puts his brains to sleep. At the appropriate time he will discourse with enlightening felicity on the Four Noble Truths and the Eight-fold Path of the Buddhists; but in the editorial chair of the *Homestead* he gives his mind, with a concentration which he finds stimulating and entertaining, to the plainer truths and the limited yet potentially delectable path pertaining to the co-operative farmers. In other spells he is an artist, appealing in divers ways to the wonder-sense and the sense of beauty. Even when he takes a wheel-barrow for his theme he is able to give it something of the mysterious setting and suggestion of his elf-mounds. He makes an old farmer in the country, with his mountain background, elemental and heroic. In his twilight and evening pictures he is a poet using colour as his medium. His seascapes are often alluring and lovely; his bathers are romantic and his hills are mystery. He looks, not the poet, seer, and artist he is, but a genial

vikings. To live in Dublin and be a friend of "A. E." is to be in the way of finding Dublin and life and—unless one is a hopeless case—even one's self inexhaustibly interesting. Some time ago he and Mr. George Bernard Shaw met casually, neither knowing the other, before a picture in a Dublin art gallery and dropped into conversation about the picture, then about art, and eventually about life. Each was astonished and bewildered at the cleverness, originality, and humour of the other. When they parted the first desire of each was to be enlightened as to the identity of the "extraordinary man" with whom he had been talking. The story of the meeting and the quest created lively amusement amongst the friends of both.

At present we are concerned with "A. E." in one special capacity. He is the philosopher, the cheerful philosopher, of the Plunkett movement. He looks to the land and those who live on the land with enthusiasm and affection. Earth in his poetic vision is a goddess, a dark divinity; he upbraids those who have made the irreverent mistake of "calling its holy substance common clay;" when he thinks of its mystic significance, he tells us in one of his poems, "I look with sudden awe beneath my feet." He does not of course address farmers in that style, or anything nearly like it, but in a graphic and lively way he leads the man on the land to the knowledge of earth-powers and earth-goddesses he can appreciate. Sometimes in his *Homestead* visions he seems to set farmers engaged in the planting of potatoes on as high a plane as the creative spirits of mystic literature beginning the fashioning of a cosmos after a Night of Brahma,



only the expression of the vision and appreciation is racy of the soil and homely. Indeed with his imagination, humour, and fine practical sense he makes the *Homestead* refreshing reading, and from year's end to year's end he keeps in divers ways the gospel of the vast potentialities of the soil and of natural life on the land before the people.

The Irish Agricultural Organisation Society, the I.A.O.S., as it is familiarly called, now represents over a hundred thousand farmers, and is consequently one of the most important forces in the country. Built up steadily in the face of considerable opposition, most of it unreasoning, and with suspicions, inertia, antiquated notions, and other ills to live down, it is one of the great constructive developments of modern Ireland. Its success has not been uniform and unvarying, but in many places, from midland regions to the wild north-western coast of Donegal, it has developed great energy of character and business qualities. Numerous co-operators are fine individualities. Indirect results, like the effect of the association of farmers of different creeds in the societies and their work, and the opportunity often availed of by the clergy of acting and thinking with the people, are decidedly to the good. The purely agricultural co-operative societies have not yet made all the headway that might be expected ; the system of working in the co-operative creameries is far superior to what it was in the later years of the nineteenth century, though even here the Irish co-operator is still behind the Danish and others. However, the important point is that he is going ahead.

Mr. Russell maintains that the new movement for

the organisation of agriculture opens up "infinitely more interesting and complex vistas" than have been generally sighted yet. The ideal and programme he keeps before the farmers are decidedly bold, but they can be briefly expressed: If the farmers are ever to see in rural districts any of the comforts and luxuries of the city—and so counteract the influences of the city—they must make it their fundamental and persistent policy to work towards complete control over the manufacture and sale of all the produce of the countryside, its live stock, its crops, its bye-products, and the manufacturing businesses connected with these. The practical working out of this policy would turn the co-operative societies, which are as a rule specialised for one purpose, into general purposes societies. Thus the dairy society would become an agricultural society, having its agricultural store, its credit or banking department, its poultry department, and other branches specialised for the sale of whatever other produce the district might cultivate. There would finally be one large and well-equipped business firm doing the business hitherto done by a dozen or two dozen small and inadequate concerns. It would make large profits for its members. It could promote village and home industries for the women, have its own carpenters and shoemakers, make its own harness and saddlery, and employ local labour permanently—in the summer in the fields, in the winter at other work. Out of the profits of such great rural co-operative societies many things could be done for the people without the members feeling the cost. Village halls and recreation rooms could be built, rural libraries started, and as the process

went on, with something attempted and done year by year, our village and rural life would grow beautiful. The alliance of the local societies with large federations would make the farmer's position strong in the economic and political worlds, but not so strong as Mr. Russell is in the habit of assuming—labour, manufacturing, and other local and national claims will have to be reckoned with. If we get the farmers and the labourers in country districts into the same associations, and the associations into union with national federations, we have, says Mr. Russell, a united working Ireland. Eventually, to put the idea in another way, we would have a series of local industrial “states,” an aggregation of co-operative commonwealths. Naturally, if such associations or states are to grow and thrive to the utmost the labourers and the artisans must be genuinely co-operative units, or at any rate in a far higher position than they are at present. On this point Mr. Russell has not yet spoken clearly; neither have the farmers. On the status, dignity, education, and destiny of labour, the farming, manufacturing, ecclesiastical, and other Irish worlds require a liberal education yet. Mr. Russell himself looks to the social and human results of this possible complete organisation of rural life and industry as the greatest outcome. He says finely and truly that we should aim at creating a social order in which the struggle for existence will give way to a brotherhood of workers, where men, dependent on the success of their united endeavours for their own prosperity, will instinctively think first of the community and secondly of themselves.



It is good at any rate that the progressive farmers have been given so large an idea, and that they have received it with interest and sympathy. We build up from the ideal, the mental model. Even the partial realisation of this ideal would go far, but by no means the whole way, to remove blots and blight in Irish village and rural life that trouble all thinking observers. Brotherhoods of workers with ideas are just what rural and urban Ireland needs.

Many have commented on what they deemed the incongruity of a man of "A. E.'s" poetic vision and artistic capacity devoting several hours of his day to issues bearing on bacon-curing, vegetables, grain-crops, poultry, and other things affecting farmers and housewives. It is a loss undoubtedly to art and poetry, but it is a good and bracing thing for the weekly farmer-audience, and "A. E." himself apparently enjoys the intellectual association with this natural and striving world. And after all, to be a guide, philosopher, and friend to the potential hero and discoverer on the land is a noble rôle. Here, too, as in his poetic prose and poetry, though in a different way, he is helping to make Ireland interesting and heroic again.

Similarly, in latter years, another distinctive Irishman who had brooded much on Celtic dream and deed, and given memorable literary re-creation to old heroic life in his own way, turned his soul and his steps after many days to squalid or forlorn sides of our modern town-life and the problem of getting wasted clerks and other denizens back to humanising existence on the land. This was Mr. Standish O'Grady; and one of my happiest experiences in

Dublin was to be able to give him the social press-pulpit he needed, and that Ireland needed, too. Almost from boyhood he had been heroic in my imagination. "Years ago in the adventurous youth of his mind," as "A. E." once said, "Mr. O'Grady found the Gaelic tradition like a neglected *dún* with the doors barred, and there was little or no egress. Listening, he heard from within the hum of an immense chivalry, and he opened the doors, and the wild riders went forth to work their will." This was in reference to Mr. O'Grady's fascinating *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period*. History in the ordinary sense it is not; it is romance, vision, imaginative truth, rapture, prose poetry, a vivid re-kindling and re-telling of the old spirit and the old sagas. It was a wonderful book for its period of publication: it appeared in the desolate eighties, when only the few gave a thought to the bygone deeds and the bygone magic of Gaeldom. But Mr. O'Grady, on fire with his epic and romantic theme, wrote as if the souls of all men were kindled by the old names and attuned to the old music. At the time hardly anybody secured or knew of the book. Mr. O'Grady, glowing with the tale of Cuchulainn and his kindred, was as strange and solitary as a rhapsodist or prophet in a desert. But he was in the happy position of the man of vision and feeling writing for himself. He went on writing for himself, choosing highways or byways of Irish romance and history. He was duly discovered, and by the mid-nineties his presentation of heroic times and moods spelt riches for us all. Meanwhile Mr. W. B. Yeats had arisen, "A. E." had haunted and charmed a discerning circle—Katharine

Tynan, Dora Sigerson, and others, had shown still earlier that Ireland was yet songful—while on the Gaelic side Dr. Hyde and his new heroic company had forgathered, but had little hope or thought as yet of the adventures and the joyance to be. Of all who wrote in those years in English, O'Grady to the popular and general view seemed the greatest link with the older Gael, or at any rate with his civilisation. His prose suggested the colour, music, movement, many-sided character of a great Feis in the fulness of day. "A. E.'s" prose, at certain stages, though it did not reach the many, had great flashes of what could be deemed the reflective ancient Gael's inner mind; his poetry in its subtle and cosmic intuitions made more difficult demands on his audience. Yeats was a more mysterious and preoccupied singer—except in certain simple utterances—who might have seemed isolated and individual not simply to Gaels old or new but to fairies or *dévas* themselves. In the succeeding ten or twelve years, while all these writers found further and wider appreciation, a world of new interests had arisen; a different Ireland, or Irelands, came into manifestation. We often had a curious feeling that somehow Ireland had been suddenly re-peopled.

But there was always a dark side to the picture. When Mr. O'Grady came to see me in Dublin in 1908 we had already printed pages on pages of social pictures and criticism. We had tried to see Ireland steadily and see it whole, and while the new intellectual, artistic, and industrial developments were full of hope, and not seldom remarkable, it was impossible, and it would have been foolish and inhuman,



to overlook the wide social stagnation, inertia, squalid poverty, pessimism, and decay. Through all the five years these things were as much in our minds as the brightening features. Slum horrors, country "housing" evils, the often despised and degraded condition of labour north and south, the social and moral blight in towns, poor law anomalies, problems of western fishers, weavers, and kelp-burners, and a score of other things, were tackled week in week out. Several of the pictures were grimly realistic, notably some in a series on Dublin slums by Seumas Ua Pice, and kindred ones in the same sphere which a poor law official was enabled to draw from his daily experiences. When we turned to alert, modern Belfast, or to remote, lowly Connacht there were still startling features. In one week in December 1910 we had Belfast and Connemara in grim conjunction. Miss Alice Milligan, a Protestant contributor, drew a realistic picture of doomed consumptive workers in the northern capital—she had known some to stay at work till within forty-eight hours of the end. A description of experiences which the new Catholic Bishop of Galway, Dr. O'Dea, and others, had just given a Congested Districts Board Committee at Recess showed the western way:—

"Dr. O'Dea said on a recent visit of his to several parishes in Connemara, in Rossavilla he asked to be taken by the parish priest into what he considered was a typical house. It was the house of a widow who had recently been ill, and contained six or seven children crouched around what was called a fire. As he spoke he heard the lowing of a beast, quite near, and turning round observed that it came from a little

room off the kitchen. He saw people lying opposite the fire in the kitchen. He was informed that the house was better than many another in Connemara. His lordship mentioned a previous experience in another part of Connemara. When walking with a parish priest he asked to be taken into a house which the priest regarded as more miserable than the rest of the houses in the district. He ascertained that it contained only one room, and in that room were housed during the winter the father, the mother, and the children, with whatever cattle they had, the pigs, the poultry, and the rest. Those were the conditions. These instances were representative of the conditions that prevailed in Connemara. 'I confess I was shocked beyond measure,' continued his lordship. 'I had no idea that the people were so wretched, and I asked myself what the Congested Districts Board had been doing for that district.' Another point on which he might lay stress was the recent epidemic of fever in one of the islands off the coast. What was the cause of that fever except that the people had been left to live under conditions not fit for human beings?

"Monsignor MacAlpine said that in Clifden Union alone there were over 3000 tenancies under £4 valuation, while at the same time within the confines of the Union grazing and mountain farms 68,000 acres in extent were in possession of 184 non-residents.

"Mr. P. J. O'Malley, chairman Oughterard Rural District Council, said the statements applied with equal relevance to the Union of Oughterard. There were 3800 holdings, and 3200 under £5 valuation. The holdings only barely merited to be called land.

In Ross one-third of the parish was in the hands of one man—Lord Ardilaun—and outside his demesne nearly one-third of the parish was either grazed for himself or on the eleven months' system. There were hundreds of people in Lettermore who had not an animal in the world. There were hundreds of families who never knew the taste of milk since they left their mothers' breasts."

To dwell at length on these sides and aspects of Ireland would be simply to pile up ills and horrors. But it is essential that they and the complicated problems they raise should be remembered, if our picture is to preserve any sense of proportion.

Mr. Standish O'Grady had been studying them and brooding deeply upon them, and to my great gratification he desired to deal with them as well as the rest of us. For two years, or more, in the *Peasant*, and then the *Irish Nation*, he grappled with the realities and problems in one way or another. He brought to them the energy and intensity he had given to the old heroic chivalry twenty years before, but this time an impassioned humanity, relieved by poetry, irony, and humour, moved his pen. He did not spare Mr. Russell's idols—the farmers, long petted and coddled, he said, by politicians and parliaments, and still letting the richest reaches of Ireland go to grass and waste; he did not spare the clergy, afraid or unwilling to apply their own gospel to life. He brought a gallant note into the discussion of outwardly miserable matters, and several series of his articles, like "About Paradises," "Life and Liberty: Letters to a Dublin Clerk," were often fascinating reading. They heartened and helped those who were working



at the problems, or trying to grapple with them, in divers ways. He preached a new communism, and at one stage sketched in arresting detail a possible, and, he maintained, a practicable commune, or series of communes, for weary clerks and others who would go back to the land. He himself had taken a farm of some twenty acres in Wicklow, and he furnished engaging accounts of his labours and experiences in its working. Week by week he gave his "clerks" incidental little lectures of a kind they had never heard before from pulpit or press or platform. Here is one out of scores :—

"And, another thing. Don't argue ; at least, don't get into loggerheads with worldly-wise people. Think things out for yourselves. You have understanding ; your own interests are of infinite concern to you, and I am addressing myself to your interests and understanding, and not much to your imagination, hardly touching at all upon the great things which lie ahead.

"You will only fret and vex yourselves by arguing with conceited men and women of the world, who talk revilingly about human nature, as if, with their miserable little bit of experience, they understood it through and through. Of this unfathomable mystery they really know nothing at all.

"The man of the world knows as little about human nature as the lobster does of the sea. Like the lobster he knows just as much as his pair of horny eyes permit him to know—no more. Human nature includes Sparta as well as Liverpool, and the Fianna Eireann as well as the Dublin Stock Exchange, and is by no means easy to understand. Indeed, those know it least who think they know it most.

“ You will observe that I use the word Nature where more than Nature seems to be meant. I do so, partly because I don't wish unnecessarily to introduce the most sacred word in the language ; partly because so much cant and insincerity, or worse, surrounds that word ; and partly because, since books like Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, and other materialistic literature have come into Ireland—mostly out of England—serious-minded young Irish people are growing dubious concerning the simple faith of the many. Then I would make this appeal to all, and would found it upon something which you can no more doubt than you do your own existence. For you are assured of the world of things that surrounds you, the objective and external world, as you are of yourself, of the solitary unitary I or me, which is in the midst of you. Now, all this world, which is not You and which keeps instantaneously unfolding and unrolling itself around you, and even every moment pulsing and surging through you, is what I call Nature.

“ Nature is a Latin word used first by some prehistoric Italian man, and has a very delicate and beautiful signification. The full form would be Res Natura. It means the Being which is always being born and about to be born, Natura being the future participle of its verb. For the Ancients Nature had a very large and sacred significance. It was thought of at the same time as the Mother of gods and men, and also as a Virgin. Nature was the Virgin-Mother of all those Mediterranean classic and prehistoric nations. As representing the fecundity of the earth, she was Ops ; and, as Queen of Heaven, Astræa. Curiously, our word co-operation, which is so im-

portant in this connection, is derived from Ops. Ops is a form of *opus*, *operis*, work; the most primitive and most fundamental kind of work being that of tilling the earth (Ops); our Gaelic word *obair* is, of course, from the same root. The ancient name of the Virgin-Mother of all things is in this word which we so lightly use to-day.

“In our time Nature is reassuming that large significance which she possessed for the Ancients. All the great modern poets have been impassioned Nature-lovers—Byron, Shelley, Wordsworth, Walt Whitman. Consider the significance of this; no great literature in our age save that which expresses the love of Nature. For other great Nature-poetry we have to go back to the Psalms. Again, modern science has been extending and deepening this general feeling towards Nature by its revelation of the marvel and mystery of her processes, and the rediscovery not only of life but of something which we only faintly and feebly indicate by the words mind and wisdom. I say ‘rediscovery,’ for, when society was simpler and men less sophisticated, and more in touch with realities, there was an intuitive perception of an intelligence or intelligences pervading all Nature, and present in the very least of natural processes.

“Recall our own Saint Columba’s words:—

“‘Crowded thick with Heaven’s angels  
Is every leaf of the oaks of Derry.’

Angelic intelligences at work everywhere.

“If you read St. Adamnan’s *Life of St. Columba* you will find that the latter possessed in a singular degree the faculty of second sight.



"Modern science, delving and probing into Nature's mysteries with a curiosity of which I don't quite approve, has discovered the Atom of which all things material are composed, and has found it to be as marvellous and mysterious as the Universe itself, and a reservoir of the most tremendous potencies. Le Bon tells us that the mere mechanical power stored in the atoms of a teaspoonful of water is more than the equivalent of all the existing steam-power of all France. Proud science has at last found her Atom, and stands aghast before it !

"Now, while you have each a different religion or philosophy, you all believe in Nature. *Res Natura* does not permit you to be a sceptic, but, whether you like it or not, compels you to believe. In whatever else you believe—and I am no enemy to belief if it be not belief in evil—you must believe in Nature, which you hear, see, touch, taste, breathe ; which has formed you, atom by atom, in your mother's womb, and reared you to the stature of a man, and will cause you to decline in age, and will take your life in the end, when you pay 'Nature's debt.' And I want you, as a preliminary of action, to consider with me what is Nature's meaning and intention with respect to us, the most highly gifted of her creatures on this planet—how she intends us to live, what are her commands—in order that we may learn them and understand and obey."

A number of people volunteered for the new communal life, but Mr. O'Grady was not satisfied with the extent of the other element he deemed necessary : supporters in the background who would provide funds to a certain amount, to start the commune

and keep it going till it could be self-supporting. Several indeed were willing, but not enough. The unfolding of the commune scheme was as interesting as a bracing, outdoor, delightfully-told story, though coming to an unsatisfactory end. "A. E." was interested, but sceptical, all the time. He thought that only the folk on the land from childhood could successfully deal with it, and that while they might or must grow co-operative, they would not become either socialistic or communistic, at least in our time. Mr. O'Grady maintained that the farmers, even co-operative farmers, would not see or solve one-half of Ireland's problems. Which is doubtless true.<sup>1</sup>

However, the enthusiasm of two of our leading literary men for the soul in the soil and the souls and bodies above it has been entirely heartening, and has led to outcomes in agricultural prose—if the term is pardonable—not easy, or not possible, to match in the outer world. Of course other Irishmen, writers as different as Padraic Colum and Shan Bullock, have been incidentally interested, and have interested us, in the land and its appeal, while modern Irish prose takes us frequently to field and farm. But "A. E." and O'Grady are in a special sense agricultural heroes, with a certain fine essence of the soil even in their journalism.

<sup>1</sup> The allies of the co-operative movement, the United Irishwomen, organised in 1911 "to unite Irishwomen for the social and economic advantage of Ireland," promise already to prove exceedingly helpful and humanising. They co-operate also with the Gaelic League, feeling that Ireland can never be rebuilt without the Gaelic ideal, and the fostering of the best in the nation.

## CHAPTER XXI

### WORKERS' GLEAMS AND GLOOM

WHILE Mr. George Russell and others under Sir Horace Plunkett advanced the cause of agricultural co-operation, an industrial movement, whose guiding ideas and developments show a certain diversity, came also into being. Many thousands, in collective and individual capacities, have helped the mission variously, according to their acumen and opportunities. From its early years the Gaelic League in practice has been secondarily an industrial movement. So far were the industrial pleas and pleadings pushed that some types of mind were offended on occasion, deeming the insistent stressing of the duty of wearing Irish-made clothes, and using Irish articles in all possible quarters from the workshop and the kitchen to the boudoir (or *grianán*), a little out of place in an intellectual movement. The descent from psychology and the larger phases of an Irish civilisation to Irish soap and matches rather hurt their susceptibilities. Others considered that there was too much emphasising of the obvious, that any but a half-witted people would see the necessity of supporting native industries. At the same time the question was by no means so simple as it seemed. Sundry Irish industries had been killed by English legislation, or the consequences of legislation ; strange traditions and topsy-turvydom had long existed ;



some, including not a few co-operators, believed that the main part of Ireland's business was to be a supply agency, a grazing ground and kitchen-garden, for Great Britain; the home wants and market were not seriously considered at all. Not only did Ireland import numbers of articles she might well produce or manufacture herself, but actual home industries and manufactures were often thoughtlessly or wilfully ignored.

Things as they were, and things as they ought to be, were vigorously set forth by the industrial propagandists. Mental health and enthusiasm were the first results achieved by the Gaelic League. Surely and steadily the pioneers became more constructive and more practical. They realised quite clearly that without a healthy and sane social Ireland their intellectual and other schemes could not really mature. They had, as it were, the mental model of a true urban and rural civilisation, they kept it before the people's mind, and, little or much, they set themselves to realise it objectively so far as they could. If the results as yet, though appreciable, are a long way below their dreams, we must remember that some of the problems are old, complicated, and grievous, that certain root-issues require tackling by legislative authority, and that in any case amelioration and growth take time. Meanwhile thought has been sown and preaching practised in many lines. Various bodies have come into line with the Gaelic League on the question of the furtherance of Irish industries, while there are special Irish Industrial Development Associations: a national one, a registered body, and others in Cork, Belfast, &c. The

industrial and art exhibitions in connection with the Oireachtas and Feiseanna and the Sinn Féin organisation are all parts in a popularising programme. The Dublin national weeklies and the better provincial papers have devoted much attention to the question as a whole and in detail. The *Irish Industrial Journal*, Dublin, has taken, as its name implies, the general field for its province, while the Dublin *Leader*, edited by Mr. D. P. Moran, a moderately Irish, rather pro-clerical organ, much of which might be written by a cautious parish priest with a rough sense of humour, has stood for the Irish products that are "as good and as cheap" as imported products. Repeated efforts have been made to help Irish workers directly or indirectly, or rather to put them in the way of helping themselves. Thus one of the chief organisers (till lately) of the Gaelic League, Tomás O'Concannon, a vivid personality, known also as an Irish writer, has been tireless in his efforts to secure wider attention and a wider market for the work of neglected weavers and others in the west. For talented young folk in the poorer quarters posts of various kinds have been found elsewhere. The Gaelic League itself established a scholarship scheme designed to aid boys and girls from poverty-stricken homes to become trained teachers. And so on.

Of individual enterprises inspired by the movement those of Captain Otway Cuffe in Kilkenny have been the most remarkable. An ex-Army man and a Protestant, he gave his energy and his means with high enthusiasm to the new labours; and the social, industrial, and other developments, including the Kilkenny Woollen Mills, the Kilkenny Wood Workers,

tobacco fields, a theatre, and workers' homes, for which he was responsible in the Marble Town and the neighbourhood, afford material for one of the brightest chapters of latter-day Irish history. The workers in the mill and workshop, the readers in the free library, the children in the Irish classes, the players and audience in the people's theatre, the story-tellers, singers, pipers, and populace at the Feis, he saw as happy and harmonious parts of a great whole. He became Mayor of Kilkenny, and his name and example were an inspiration far through Ireland. To the sorrow of all classes he died at the end of 1911, but the work he inaugurated goes on, while his relative and co-pioneer, the Countess of Desart, is spiritedly to the fore. It is calculated that in ten years they expended £70,000 in the different industrial projects and developments in Kilkenny. Captain Cuffe was quick to seize the significance of the rising Gaelic idea and its possibilities in the way of character and creativeness, and he lived up to his faith.

Speaking generally, a considerable public opinion in favour of Irish industries and products—entailing often what may be called a system of voluntary protection—has been created since the beginning of the century. Home manufacturers have derived very decided benefit from the movement. At present over 500 firms use the Irish Trade Mark, which means that their products are as Irish as they can possibly be. The business of meeting and securing the home market, Ireland's own, has been advanced an appreciable stage. In another matter much insisted upon, the development of trade relations with the Continent,



steady progress is also being made, as shown by official figures from sundry sources. For instance, the value of Ireland's direct exports to France in 1910 was nearly double that of her direct exports in 1909—of the indirect trade, goods which pass through the hands of English firms *en route*, we have no official information.

The relation of the clergy to this movement, as to so many other things, has varied greatly. Bishops and priests have been criticised with great candour and sometimes severity, for thoughtless or deliberate importation of church materials, statuary, pictures, and other ecclesiastical requirements, while incidentally their taste in art has sometimes been the subject of mingled satire and irony. On the other hand, some bishops and numerous priests have given sincere and sustained support to the industrial cause. In many districts the priests have been its most ardent advocates. Of all-round pioneers the most expressive example I know is that of Father Matt Maguire in Ulster. In the last decade he has been successively in three parishes, and has left his mark on them all. The third, Cill Sgire (Killskeery), Co. Tyrone, he has helped to make in a measure famous. Everything has been improved and brightened; industries, arts, games, bands made regular features of life, while there are scores of Irish speakers—taught by native-speaking travelling teachers—in a quarter where Irish had not been spoken, I think, for a couple of generations. The local Feis in this now “model parish” is one of the great Gaelic events of the Ulster year. Father Matt is one of the most unassuming of men. I have seen him at several meetings of the executive

of the Gaelic League, and never heard him make a remark at one of them. He has come all the way from Tyrone to Dublin to listen, to learn the latest developments and duties, and to vote when voting was needed. The notion of domineering or dictation in connection with him is humorous. He just sets his people in the way of doing things that are worthy of them, and is happy when they take his advice and live up to it. When a noted Irish visitor, Catholic, Protestant, or Presbyterian, pays a passing visit to Cill Sgíre he is able to call up musicians, singers, and dancers and arrange an informal *céilidh* in about twenty minutes.

In the ranks of labour itself some bold and able types have arisen, notably in Dublin and Belfast. Whether they preach Socialism, co-operation, or trade unionism, they keep their eyes as a rule on Irish conditions and characteristics. They make headway with their own class and meet varied opposition or misunderstanding amongst sundry clergymen, farmers, manufacturers, publicans, slum-owners, food adulterators, those who want no change, and those who say that nothing particular can be done pending the establishment of a national legislative authority. The clerical opposition is mainly to anything that seems to savour of Socialism, though some have the singular notion, as their utterances show, that a "poor" class is a direct creation or design of Providence, and to them a social state without poverty, and a measure of abject poverty, is unthinkable. Much of what they ascribe in a cloudy way to Sin and Devil springs from palpably anti-social, selfish, and materialistic factors. The social criticism and

reconstructive theories they have heard of late years have staggered them. The most incisive of such criticism from the labour side has come from Mr. James Connolly, who after a term in the United States, where he edited the Socialist *Harp*, returned to Dublin in 1910. He is a forcible speaker, a man of wide reading and much thinking, and a trenchant writer. In the summer of 1910 he gave us a taste of his quality in a little book on *Labour, Nationality, and Religion*, which was a challenge and a message rather exceptional in Ireland. Avowedly a reply to a series of Lenten lectures by the Rev. Robert Kane, S.J., against an imaginary monster called Socialism, it contained much to set toilers in a spirited and constructive mood. It began by carrying the war into Africa, for it quoted Church Fathers against the alarmed and eloquent Jesuit, told home truths about the place of the laity in the Church, and let in gleams of historical light very trying on certain tender eyes in Ireland. The more elaborate volume, *Labour in Irish History*, published later in the year, was an original and brilliant exposition of facts and factors long ignored or steeped in moonshine, destroyed some middle-class and clerical legends, and conveyed a brave message to democracy. Mr. Connolly works as an organiser for Cumannacht na hEireann (the Socialist Party of Ireland) and also the Irish Transport Workers' Union, of which Mr. James Larkin was the principal founder. During strikes in Belfast, Cork, and Dublin, Mr. Larkin acted in Ireland for the Dockers' Union (Britain), but, differing from the heads of the latter on their attitude to the Irish strikers at a crucial stage, he



threw in his lot with the Irishmen and set himself to the task of organising an independent body. Over this and later developments there came considerable controversy and trouble, which do not concern us here. Mr. Larkin has proved a deep-hearted, impassioned, "undiplomatic" missionary who preaches by shocks—in Ireland anybody who interferes with social selfishness is not considered "diplomatic" or "tactful" in high places. He founded the *Irish Worker* early in 1911; its plain speaking and his own popularity with numbers of workers brought it a large circulation from the outset. Mr. Larkin and some of his friends have also started on the difficult task of creating a progressive municipal spirit amongst Dublin toilers, and of leading a militant labour party into the Corporation, where a "whisky-ring" and other anti-social forces have long been dominant. Mr. Larkin and four of his friends won seats at the elections in January 1912. In point of capacity and public spirit the Dublin Corporation as a whole, like the Dublin County Council, is far behind a number of the councils in the provinces.

The Dublin labour world contains other interesting personalities; one of them, Peadar O'Maicin, a house-painter, treats of social questions in Irish. Like the Provost of Trinity College, he has also a taste for Esperanto. The Socialist Party of Ireland illustrates more diversity and raciness of character than almost any other body in the capital; some of its speakers might have come straight from the "Abbey" boards, or the Ulster Literary Theatre, whose Dublin visits brought us kindred light and shade. Yet it looms rather horribly in the imagination of metropolitan

priests and of graziers in the neighbouring county of Meath and elsewhere. Bad as are great stretches of Dublin slumdom and its borderlands, the said priests do surprisingly little in the way of social work, though Franciscans carry on a well-meaning temperance crusade. There are many Dublins—Irish, non-Irish, and some that are almost non-human. I hope there is no place else in Ireland where numbers of children are so utterly miserable and neglected, so crying a disgrace to Church and State. It is easy to get to Wonderland from Dublin, and equally easy to get to what might pass for the gates of Hell. So much beauty on all sides of Dublin might well seem generous waste or glorious extravagance on the part of Nature. If there is anything more depressing than a study of Dublin's slums in detail it is a study of Dublin's slum-dwellers in crowds, as when a national procession that represents some living and hopeful idea passes near the poorer quarters. The inertia and weariness and cold, clammy hopelessness of those street and quayside crowds make an awesome contrast. They look like people who have no healthy interests, no fresh and natural desires, nothing that the wildest imagination could call dreams; people who go through life as a narrow, burdensome, unintelligible pilgrimage; they have lost the capacity of sympathy, understanding, and hope. Foreign ecclesiastics speaking now and then in Dublin dwell on its wonderful faith and piety; they never see the deplorable and harrowing sides. Much is said of the constant and congested congregations in the churches; close contact with elements of the same congregations reveals much that is squalid or pitiful.

Throughout the Irish workers' world in general we see the association of stagnation and restiveness, pessimism and resurgence, gloom and gleam. Its missionaries are mostly laymen, and generally speaking they do not belong to any of the avowed political parties, though they include a few Sinn Fein men, P. T. Daly, for instance, and though Mr. Joseph Devlin, M.P., and a few other prominent Parliamentarians are distinctly democratic. The general Irish revival has brought labour hope and help, the co-operative movement has softened some farmers' hearts in its regard, and, in another direction, it is pleasing to note the widening success of the small farm and cottage prize schemes in connection with many of the Departmental "County Committees." While critical on some points the inspectors of late years report more and more indices of taste, industry, and new interest in work and life. The comfortable, flower-fronted cottage becomes more common. In cities, such as Dublin, Belfast, and Cork, and in some of the larger towns, a socialistic propaganda, generally with an Irish flavour, has begun to make headway. The older Gael of course had socialistic and communistic leanings, and something of the spirit remained to our own day with the poorer people, though English legislation and Irish ecclesiasticism had driven nearly every trace of it from the middle classes. Various developments of later years have conduced to a certain recovery of it, sometimes unconscious. One of the outer signs of the progress of Socialism, or what some call a simple theory of the application of Christianity to life, is the fact that Catholic prelates and priests preach repeatedly in an



impassioned and confusing way against what they imagine Socialism to be. They have no conception of evolutionary Socialism; they dwell in fantastic style on the cruder utterances of the earlier and some of the later socialists, though giving the Devil the main credit, or discredit, for the thing or the theory. They do not appear to believe for a moment that Catholicism nowadays can be practically illustrated in economics or lived in the everyday social order.

Some younger priests see the irony and humiliation of the position, the unchristian spectacle of Catholic ecclesiastics as impassioned defenders of worldly property, honouring the rich or well-to-do in this world and bidding the poor be content with the prospect of heaven in the next; forgetting or ignoring the great fact that the Catholic ideal is collectivist, not individualistic as the term is usually understood. They are sensitive on the subject of clerical graziers, of whom we still have some, and clerical patrons of the Stock Exchange, of whom we have many. The instinct of those younger priests is to help the poor to raise their character, brighten their environment, and widen the opportunities of their children through higher education and other things that logically follow. They see that all such work is "godly"—and that mere talk about Providence regarded as the head of a juridical ecclesiastical system is not necessarily anything of the kind—even though described as "socialistic" in Ireland. It is often difficult for the young clergy to help the work forward, and dangerous to be suspected of socialistic leanings. So sometimes, in the dioceses under old-fashioned or autocratic bishops, they look

on helplessly and pensively, feeling lonely amid the waste of life, and painfully conscious of the fact that official Irish Catholicism is socially ineffective or a compromise. This holds true even of some Columban Leaguers who have come out with high hopes from Maynooth. Sometimes the co-operative movement, sometimes the industrial movement, sometimes the Gaelic League—which are not nominally or avowedly “socialistic”—give them relieving scope. Still the crucial questions for Catholicism in Ireland remain unanswered—Can its official theology be liberalised and spiritualised? Can it be applied, as the Catholic Bishop of Ross<sup>1</sup> asked some years ago, more practically to everyday life? At present it is far too little either of a gospel or a philosophy. So it does not enlighten and inspire souls, or check anti-social sins and evils, as it might were it truly evangelical, liberal, and vital.

<sup>1</sup> The Bishop of Ross, Dr. Kelly, keeps very closely and interestedly to Irish realities. He emphasises the need of the development of Ireland's internal trade, the supply by Irish workers themselves of the home wants, both in foodstuffs and manufactured articles. He desires to see more industrial villages and factories of the Dripsey and Blarney character, so that the people while earning good wages could live under pleasant conditions. He urges young men to cultivate the habit of reading solid books. He is one of our—unhappily too few—really social-spirited bishops.

## CHAPTER XXII

### SMALL HOLDINGS AND GREAT HEARTS

THE mixed and often unexpected nature of social, industrial, educational, and even intellectual matters in rural Ireland may be better understood if we take a particularly poor region and study it closely for a little while. A trip due west from Galway city will serve the purpose admirably. Along the Cois Fhairrge, or seaside, road we find much that is forlorn, much to suggest that the toil of life on the bleak little holdings must be a grim ordeal. All the same it has certain pleasant and even romantic latter-day associations. Some nine or ten miles from Galway is the village of An Spidéal (Spiddal) whose boys' school in recent years has achieved distinction as a centre of bi-lingual education. In the neighbourhood one of the most successful of the Gaelic Training Colleges holds its session in the late summer and early autumn, attracting lay and clerical students from centres as remote as Dublin and even from quarters outside Ireland. From a humble home in this neighbourhood came Micheál Breathnach,<sup>1</sup> a delightful writer and individuality, of whom more anon. Leaving An Spidéal and heading for An Gort Mór we come to a wonder-world of wildness, especially from Costello onward. In this chastening and impressive place of lakes and heathery hills we pass eight

<sup>1</sup> Meé-haul Branoeh, "ch" sounded as in "loch."



bi-lingual schools, where teachers of a new type work out new plans and methods, but often complain that official programmes have no sufficient relation to the needs and claims of the countryside. At Costello the sea comes up into the land in a long narrow creek that suggests a Norwegian fjord. It is pleasant to see the sails—especially the new white ones—pass round the houses by the water's edge, glide round little promontories, move off again, and gradually creep into the country. The boats come to load turf (or peat) for Galway, Aran, and Clare, and doubtless an odd keg of untaxed whisky is taken off with the turf. Gortmore is in its way a wonderful place. All round the Beanna Beola stand frowning and serrated, piled up like huge pillows, an epic of desolation. Here it is that Padraic MacPiarais—our boldest educational pioneer, described fully a little later—finds his *Tir na nOg*, when he can spare a few days from St. Enda's College, Dublin. We can see his cottage across the lake. We are shown by the old folk where Sean Mhatias, the strange old man of his story and drama, *Iosagán*, used to live; we are told indeed by some that he is really not dead yet.

Going onward from Gortmore to Rosmuc we come to know acute phases of the emigration problem—indeed it presses all the way from Galway. The social connection between Rosmuc and Boston is very much closer than that between Rosmuc and Dublin. To the local imagination Boston is a sort of exalted Rosmuc across the water. Returned emigrants will tell us of Boston shops where Connemara folk transact all their business in Irish; at home in

Irish-speaking Rosmuc there are English sermons, or were till a year or two ago at any rate. In Boston every Thursday Irish "servant" girls have a half-holiday, when they go to favourite halls and have Irish songs, *seanchus*, and dancing *go leór*. Every item of news from Rosmuc and kindred places is discussed at these gatherings. Some Gaels have been puzzled over the fact that it is difficult to induce Connemara boys and girls to take—or keep—situations in Dublin, &c., while they show no hesitation about faring as far away as America. It is forgotten that dozens of friends and acquaintances are before them in places like Boston, Portland, &c. Boston and Portland are very near in Connemara's imagination; Dublin is very remote. Dublin indeed does not understand the west or the western emigration question at all. Dublin-dwelling folk do not realise the conditions of existence west of Galway. Take the case of a man with a holding valued at £3, most of it rocky land. He must work this with his spade, and his staple crop is potatoes, which feed himself and his family. The family, almost invariably a big one, grows up. What is to become of the ten or eleven children? One boy gets the land, one or two of the girls may get married; the rest go away to Portland or Boston or another. Many do well and send home a good deal of money. Not a few return, when they have saved what they think a fortune; the boys obtain land, if possible, the girls marry, and all settle down to something like the old familiar life. This returning when there is any chance of a settlement in the old place is a notable fact in connection with Connemara. The crux of the whole question is

land—with industries allied to agriculture. Young men have declared again and again that they would not emigrate if they could obtain pieces of land; none of the girls would go if they had the choice of getting married at home. There are thousands of acres of wild moorland in Connemara which could be reclaimed and made happy home-haunts. Hundreds of young men would be heartily glad of the opportunity of taking part in the reclamation. The Connemara man's capacity for spade-work on his native soil, to which he is so intensely devoted, is astonishing. Given a fair sphere he would do wonders in the way of intensive culture.

From other parts of Connacht, men and women, boys and girls, are obliged to go away to spend months of the year in the gardens and harvest-fields of Britain. About November they return in hundreds; they spend a night or two in Dublin, often on the pavements outside the North Wall or the Broadstone station, a pathetic medley indeed, and then crowd themselves into their particular compartments of the early morning train to the West. On these occasions they seem sadly different from what they are in their own humble yet genial western homes. On the homeward journey they pass through great tracts of grass lands, more or less waste lands, and—extraordinary economic irony—by or near farms whose tenants are complaining bitterly of the scarcity, the dearness, and sometimes the inefficiency of labour. They also bring back shoddy and other cheap articles, and home manufacturers complain. Furthermore, they—like others who do not go far afield—bring back trivial or trashy publications, never



a serious one within measurable distance of literature. From time to time certain bishops and priests preach fine-sounding sermons against the evils of vain and vicious reading, and often give no help, but sometimes positive hindrance, to the starting of free libraries or pleasant reading-rooms through which taste could be developed. So Ireland loses at every point.

As for Connemara, it has several further problems. The fishing, the hand-loom weaving and other industries are in sore need of development. These and other improvements, including technical and industrial training that would help young folk to find careers at home, would incidentally do much to stop the poteen, or whisky-stilling "industry," one of the great curses of Connemara. It has done much to poison and destroy Connemara, the mainland and the islands. To a great extent the traffic is "winked at" by the "authorities"; there has been scarcely any attempt to interfere with the flow of poteen on the more or less social occasions: weddings, christenings, and so on. Very often the police are partakers; the "bottle for the sergeant" is a recognised feature in several places. Poteen has come to be associated in a strange degree with the expression of the social and even religious, or semi-religious, feelings of the people. Thus at "wakes" and funerals it is given *go leór*. "Wakes" have some touching and moving characteristics with a tradition of dateless generations behind them. The serving of poteen in later times is as regular a fact as the telling of stories of the Fianna by the elders, as they watch round the corpse, or the haunting *caoine* or *sgrad na maidne*

over the dead. The good and the bad are intertwined, and it is hard to break the evil spell. Young priests have found serious difficulties in the way of reform at wakes and funerals, and the old are not always sympathetic or helpful. On the occasions of weddings in parts of Connemara the poteen evil has been simply rampant. The wild and frenzied scenes that take place at various musters, as a consequence of poteen drinking, are startling. It is all going far to destroy a people with many fine and delightful traits; in fact, it is their social and hospitable spirit, their passion for life, expressed though it be in a crude way, that is largely responsible for this passage to destruction. The problem is the substitution of natural joys for unnatural ones in bleak and kindly Connemara, beginning with brighter education and opportunities for the young. Much the same may be said of some scores of other places in Ireland.

When these or other Connacht folk are moved out of congested districts, from patches of rock or bog to economic holdings, other acute and interesting problems arise. The congest has to be educated into a new system of working, and a certain transformation in himself is needed. Some of our co-operative pioneers have dwelt on the necessity of serious training of the congests on experimental farms, before each secured an allotment as his own property. It was urged in the *Irish Nation* that the better plan would be thorough social co-operative farming for the congests after the period of probation, and on lines akin to those illustrated by Kropotkin in his fascinating book, *Fields, Factories, and Workshops*. Such co-operative farms suggest delightful possi-

bilities in the west. Lord Castletown, a practical pioneer of co-operation himself, was one of those who were attracted by the idea. Connacht teachers, keenly concerned about the future of their pupils, and troubled by the divorce of primary education from the life-conditions of the rural communities, saw happy possibilities in such farms. So, of course, did representatives of that Irish element which has no faith in peasant proprietorship. But it is all a matter of the future.

The Connemara whose conditions and problems I have sketched very briefly has given us two of our most notable modern Irish writers. In personality, outlook, and style there could not well be greater contrasts. Padraic O'Conaire, who hails from the Rosmuc district, looks more keenly and grimly at what is called actual life, with its character and apparent irony, than any other Irish writer, old, mediæval, or modern, that I know. In the sphere of the short story he is, as a rule, unlike any Gaelic teller of tales; there is no imagination, colour, or romance; just the ground-going, essential, relentless story, presented with a placid detachment which some find serene and others cynical. The style is direct, restrained, artistically measured. The ground of his short stories is varied: bleak Connemara, lower London, Judea of the first century of the Christian Era, China, &c. His novel, *Deoraidheacht*, published in 1910, is a study at stages rather than a story, a study in large measure of warped and distorted humanity, of special Irish interest only on occasions, as in the chapters devoted to a travelling show in Galway and to an Irish colony in London.



The main character, who tells the story, has been maimed by a motor-car in London, and mental and moral as well as the physical havoc ensues. The process of spending the money received by way of compensation is comparatively rapid. Then comes a pitiful life, broken by wild, strange gleams, with a tragic ending. The telling is for the most part intense and grim, with certain pathetic and a few fanciful interludes, with bursts of wild humour, with flashlights on crime and misery and sordidness. We see a warped mind in a nether world, yet with traits and traces of pity, charity, wistfulness, humour, and poetry surviving through hunger-crazes and morbid introspection. While the framework and development are not always entirely satisfying, a great deal in the tale has been intensely felt and seen. There is unsparing revelation of distorted character. There is also a share of lovable character in an unloving and unlovely environment. Padraic O'Conaire is also a playwright, though but one short play from his pen has so far been produced—its characters and atmosphere are like those of his Connemara stories—but he is the author of one of the long prize dramas to be rendered at the Oireachtas of 1912. While he knows a great deal of Continental literature, especially French, we feel that he has not been much affected, at least directly, by other authors. He has studied and brooded over life for himself. The realist, as the term is nowadays understood, has sheer and spacious opportunities in Connemara or nether London, both of which Padraic knows intimately, no less than in Russia or Scandinavia.

Micheál Breathnach, the second Connemara writer,

is unhappily no longer with us in the flesh. He died in Dublin in October 1908, at the age of twenty-eight. His was not quite the sort of individuality one might expect from a lowly home in Connemara, for it suggested the fine flowering of a long and gracious civilisation. He received at first but the ordinary primary school education, though his mind from his youth was stored with the traditional herotales and songs of his native west. When little more than twenty he was appointed assistant-secretary and one of the Irish teachers in the London Gaelic League, where his varied gifts and rare charm of character impressed and attracted everybody. The cultured young Irish priest, the late Father Michael Moloney, to whom I referred in earlier pages, taught him Latin, while he subsequently acquired a command of French and a fair knowledge of German. With Irish, his native language, he played like an accomplished, light-hearted artist. His in sooth promised to be the richest, most musical, and freshest Irish style of our day. From his joyous, idealistic nature and his romantic pictures of the home and fireside life one might deem Connemara a Tir na nOg. Unhappily after a few years his health gave way, and he was compelled to spend his winters in the Alps, returning with the summer to take charge of the northern Connacht Training College at Mount Partry by the waters of Loch Mask. There the handsome, suave, high-hearted, boyish-looking Principal was idolised as much as he had been in London. Foreign students were just as charmed with his personality and his teaching methods as the Irish ones. Dr. Pokorny, of the Vienna University, paid him a glowing tribute,

while a French visitor, M. Jean Malye, writing in the *Peasant* in September 1908, said :—

“ The real soul of the college is Micheál Breathnach. I do not know anybody more attractive than Micheál. I found in him that true, exquisite Gaelic spirit—so kind, so agreeable, so enthusiastic, and also so decided and so strong. His is the kindness that flows from a high and generous soul, from a heart full of truth and goodness ; and his fine, innate qualities of distinction and delicacy, while they attract affection and sympathy, command also respect and esteem. . . . It would be a truism to say that Micheál is a wonderful teacher. For my own part I was delighted to attend some of his lectures. People who are really wanting in intellectual means make progress under him, so clear and simple he is. He knows also how to interest those who are already well educated ; he opens up new horizons to them.”

Unfortunately when this was written Micheál was within a couple of months of his early death. Fugitive sketches, a popular History of Ireland, and an Irish translation of Charles Kickham's homely and touching novel, *Knocknagow*, are left us—along with sprightly and treasured private letters—to show us his quality and suggest what he might have achieved in Irish literature. We who knew him, however, do not take the work as a thing apart, but as sparks and flashes from the finer fire which was himself. No young life in the Ireland of our generation has left more affectionate and more beautiful memories.<sup>1</sup> The charm and magic and blithe poise of his per-

<sup>1</sup> An Irish biography of him, by Tomas MacDomhnaill, of the Leinster Irish College, with numerous letters and sketches, is in the press.



sonality would suggest the fulness and the flower of long evolution. To have known such a character as he, coming from a remote and lowly corner of Con-nacht, may well inspire us with optimism regarding the possibilities and the future of the race.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE HERO IN THE COLLEGE

THE most courageous pioneer in the realm of Irish education is a young man of thirty-two, Padraic MacPiarais (P. H. Pearse, B.A., B.L.). He is a scholar with a child-spirit, a mystical temperament, and a Celtic nature, in the heroic and constructive sense. He has given expression in some of his Irish writing to naïve and simple beliefs and dreams of the western Catholic peasantry. At the same time as headmaster of the most remarkable secondary college in Ireland he has worked consistently to inspire his pupils with a love for the high heroic ideals of Gaeldom. He would have them manly and spirited Christians first, last, and all the time.

Born in Dublin, educated partly by the Jesuits, an enthusiast for Irish studies from his youth, at seventeen he had founded an Irish literary society, at eighteen he was elected a member of the executive of the Gaelic League, then in an early and obscure stage of its career: to outer seeming just another society that met in a back-room. Two years later he began his explorations in West Connacht, drawn to its traditional lore and character, which as the years passed proved ever more fascinating to him. He has cycled or tramped through practically every Irish-speaking district in Ireland, but Connemara remains his favourite haunt. He is one of the most

significant examples of a type with which the Gaelic League has made us fairly familiar—the educated man who goes down to the haunts of the unspoiled people and imbibes their lore and traditions to his heart's content. His favourite resting-place and rallying ground is the cottage we have noted at Costello in remote West Connacht, and most of his Irish stories and sketches are related to that region.

His metier in the Gaelic League has been the study of education in all its branches. He has pursued his studies not only throughout Ireland but in Wales, France, Belgium, &c., abroad. An enthusiast for the Irishising of education, his programme, attractively expounded in the Gaelic League weekly, which he edited for some years, was bi-lingualism : the vernacular of the district as “first language” and from the earliest possible stage an obligatory “second language,” with all teaching on the *Modh Direach*, or Direct Method, which the Gaelic League made popular here and there in Ireland. After long exposition of his theories—seeming to the multitude just as “practical” as apostles usually are—in the early summer of 1908 he made a bold move towards the realisation of his ideal in his own way. With himself as headmaster, and an expert staff of professors and extern lecturers, he established *Sgoil Eanna*, or St. Enda's College, in a pleasant quarter of Rathmines, Dublin. This secondary establishment for boys—day students and boarders—set itself to be distinctively Irish and modern in its ideals and methods. The scheme when first published seemed to many a sort of fairy tale, a dream of what Irish education ought to be. A wide and generous culture was proposed, but the forma-



tion of character, the enkindling of imagination, the creation of interest in Ireland and in life were to be kept steadily and systematically in view. In the general curriculum the first place was accorded to Irish. All modern language teaching was to be on the Direct Method, all teaching other than language teaching to be bi-lingual ; thus mathematics, physics, philosophy, or literature, as the case might be, would be taught through the medium of Irish as well as English. The earliest instruction of the younger boys was to be purely oral. An idea of the general order and ideal was shown in the announcement that they would be led up to the formal study of literature by an attractive course of hero and fairy tales and simple poetry, and that their introduction to physical science would be by means of object lessons conducted in the school gardens or in the course of country walks. The study of history, Irish history especially, was to form a special part of the curriculum, the legends, literature, and story of Ireland to be treated of in close association with the geography and physical features of the land. In this connection were planned half-holiday lectures, with lantern illustrations, alternating with excursions to places of scenic, historic, and antiquarian interest. Nature study on living and picturesque lines was mapped out. In the summer months as much as possible of the teaching would be done in the open air, and in connection with the institution a summer holiday school in a purely Irish-speaking district was proposed. But 'twere long to tell of the novelties and attractions set down, including some in the organisation of the college itself. The boldness and breadth of the proposal

astonished even friends and sympathisers. They knew it was the project of a cultured man who had noble educational ideals and the bright human sense and zest which must underlie and colour all true education. But this was Ireland, where most education for the greater part of a century had been un-Irish, and where dreams were understood to be slow to come true. This new one was not long a dream.

Sundry parents were practical and sent their boys forthwith to the new institution. Many were youths of very considerable character. All the provinces were represented. From the outset, as might be expected, St. Enda's had a flavour and atmosphere all its own. Mr. Pearse was happy in his assistants, and indeed in his pupils, and though his labours and anxieties were great—he continued for some time, by the way, to act as editor of the Gaelic League weekly—he had the satisfaction of seeing his dream come true. To every visitor interested in Irish education the scheme of things at St. Enda's was a joyous surprise; and the Irish title, “Sgoil Eanna,” soon became something of a watchword, a symbol, a national achievement, a culture-ideal in manifestation and realisation. The special gatherings—as on the occasions of Irish plays and pageants—to which the public was invited were as bracing and heartening as the Gaelic festivals. One found many things to suggest that young folk, taught and trained as they were day in day out at Sgoil Eanna, would in due course hold their heads high and speak their minds bravely and mould many things to their will.

Mr. Pearse himself says that there is nothing new

in his philosophy of education; it was practised by the founders of the Gaelic system two thousand years ago. Their very names for "education" and "teacher" and "pupil" show, as he tells us, that they had gripped the heart of the problem. The word for "education" among the old Gael was the same as for "fostering"; the teacher was a "fosterer," and the pupil was a "foster-child." The true aim of the teacher is to enable the child to realise himself at his best and worthiest. He will recognise in each of his pupils an individual human soul, distinct and different from every other human soul, miles and miles apart from the soul that is nearest and most akin to it, craving indeed comradeship and sympathy, needing discipline and guidance, but imperiously demanding to be allowed to live its own life, to be allowed to bring itself to its own perfection.

Mr. Pearse maintains further that the old Irish plan of education, as idealised for boys in the story of the Macradh of Eamhain and for girls in that of the Grianan of Lusga, was the wisest and most generous that the world has ever known. The bringing together in some pleasant place under the fosterage of some man famous among his people for his greatness of heart, for his wisdom, for his skill in some gracious craft—here we get the two things on which he lays most stress in education: the environment, and the stimulus of an individuality which can address itself to the child's worthiest self. Much in the whole order of Sgoil Eanna, in class-room and playing-field, in lecture and pageant, seems a vital modern rendering of the culture-scheme of the sunny and ever-youthful saga; and Mr. Pearse would ask nothing



better than to say with the Irish hero : " I was a child with children, I was a man with men."

The scheme proved so much of a success that in 1910 wide developments were imperative, and in the early autumn of that year Mr. Pearse boldly took over an historic mansion and demesne of fifty acres, at Rathfarnham, as the new haunt for St. Enda's, while the old one was devoted to a new secondary college, with kindred Irish ideals, for girls (Sgoil Ide, or St. Ita's). The new St. Enda's commands a prospect of alluring beauty, with the setting of the Dublin mountains, storied Beann Eadair (or Howth) and the Bay. To find the Gael teaching in such a haunt at the gates of Dublin brings the feeling that the " lean years " are ending, and that " Kathleen Ni Houlahan " is getting back bright corners of her " four beautiful green fields." By the beginning of the first session in Rathfarnham the fame of St. Enda's had travelled far, and even Irish-America was represented amongst the new boarders. Outside the scholastic sphere the most notable outcome of the College since then has been a Passion Play in Irish. Mr. Pearse himself arranged and composed it, and the main parts were taken by teachers and pupils of the institution when it was first presented, with great solemnity and beauty, in the Abbey Theatre at Easter, 1911.

Gaelic and Celtic studies and enthusiasms in this twentieth century have modified the inlook and outlook of various Irish Catholics, as I point out elsewhere. Mr. Pearse has apparently remained unaffected. Animated by the spacious and heroic pre-Christian sagas and ideals, he is able to sympathise keenly at the same time with the naïve

beliefs and the humble explanation of the universe that prevail amongst the western peasantry. It might even appear from some of his utterances that for the deepest spiritual life and belief he thinks we must go to Iar-Chonnacht. Certain of his stories are very expressive of the folk feeling and attitude. The most noted instance is that of "Iosagán" (the Child Jesus), which he has also made the subject of a delicate mystery-play. The *dénouement* is significantly theological. Iosagán has moved amongst playing children and talked with an old man who for many years has refused to enter a church.

In the last scene the old man, awed and repentant, is dying alone and remote. No human being knows his plight, that he is passing away without the ministering priest and without confession. "Bás gan sagart," death without a priest, is a crowning terror to the Catholic Gael. In this instance Iosagán goes away and brings a priest at the crucial hour, and the penitent dies happily. Thus the World-Saviour—manifested in time and place in a child's form—sets Himself secondary to the minister and intermediary. Here truly is a naïve but significant revelation of a popular theological attitude.

Speaking of literature, we may note that St. Enda's has several intellectual interests, including one unique type of author. In the mind's eye of every one who knows much of Gaelic Ireland, Mr. Pearse's chief gardener, Micheál Mag Ruairi, is a very vivid and racy personage. He overflows with character. He also overflows with North Connacht story and tradition, and the Irish he speaks is particularly idiomatic and copious. Owing to eye trouble his literary edu-

cation had to be circumscribed, and the art of writing is not his. But he has dictated several stories and dialogues—always a popular Gaelic art-form—which make lively reading, also one elaborate book, dealing with the career of Hugh O'Neill, the sixteenth-century Ulster leader. While some of the matter is only popular tradition, and while the style on occasion is colloquial, at other times rhetorical, much of the volume is very spirited and some of it graphic. Nobody who takes grave and formal views of life and literature would understand Mag Ruairi's place in Ireland. There is a flavour of wild earth and antique saga about him.

I have dwelt in some little detail on Sgoil Eanna, for in its own order it is our most significant success so far, something bravely planned and fashioned, an institution whose influence goes far afield. "Each age is a dream that is dying, or one that is coming to birth," sang Arthur O'Shaughnessy in "The Music-makers"; and one of the great dreams of the new generation in Ireland is to make education noble and natural, fitted to the wants and ends and attuned to the finer spirit of the land in which the students ought to live, and could live if all our Untilled Fields were tilled. But what the battle for the Irishising and humanising of education means in contemporary Irish circumstances nobody accustomed to a natural educational order can imagine. St. Enda's may strike the non-Irish reader as interesting in its spirit, high in its ideal, but normal in its procedure. In Ireland it is revolutionary. And its headmaster is one of those whom Arthur O'Shaughnessy called the "Music-makers."



## CHAPTER XXIV

### IRELAND AT THE PLAY

PLAYS and players and playing have added something to the stress and gaiety of our lives, not only in Dublin, Cork, and Belfast, but in country towns and parishes, since the nineties of the last century. Some of the plays have been successfully reproduced before Irish audiences in New York and London. The plays have been Irish plays, bi-lingual plays, and plays on Irish themes in English. I suppose the thought of bi-lingual plays is enough to make the blood of a dramatic critic run cold; still we have got a good deal of fun, and a little instruction, out of them in Ireland. In the later and present circumstances of the country it is easy to imagine dramatic situations in which Irish would be natural or preferable to some, and English natural or preferable to others, with consequent complications and comedy. We have had several illustrations of this on the stage, and enjoyed them.

The Irish plays, ranging from simple comic sketches to five-act tragedies, have taken us anywhere from a cabin to fairyland. It added to the zest of life if one had first to write the play, then conduct the rehearsals, lend a hand in the business of stage carpentry, and take the part of a poet or a landlord in the public performance. In the early days it did not greatly matter whether the Irish or bi-lingual play

was good or bad, from the artistic point of view. So long as it had fair speaking parts, some fairly intelligible sequence, a dance or a piper in the middle, and a strong climax, it went with *éclat*. A devoted story-teller, the older Gael, so far as we are aware, developed no drama, and the Gael or would-be Gael of our day was not bound by tradition or convention; he had, for a few years, a wonderfully open mind as to how Irish drama ought to go. In fact, it might go anyhow, he was ready to applaud a passable experiment or a lop-sided experiment. He accepted oratory, disputation, singing, dancing, feats of agility, love-making, sheep-stealing, with equal animation. Canon O'Leary himself wrote a play about sheep-stealing, making, if I remember rightly, rather a hero of the sheep-stealer; what I distinctly remember is that a sheep was brought on the stage. When this play was given in the country the difficulty was not to fill the biggest building available, but to mollify the overflow gathering that could not get inside.

Very often it was just as interesting to watch the faces and the behaviour of the audiences at Irish plays as to follow the performers themselves. In fact, the audience might be said to take part in the performance. Sometimes the incidental humours were diverting. Once at the Oireachtas we had an Irish historical play by Mr. Thomas Hayes—a Dublin school teacher well known as an Irish writer—in which the hero in a crisis passed over to the continent and joined the Irish Brigade. At a dramatic pass the thunder of the Battle of Fontenoy in the background was listened to with tense interest. The

moment it ceased there came a roar of "*Aris! Aris!*" (Encore! Encore!) from the most democratic quarter of the Rotunda. The demand of the enthusiasts who wanted the Battle of Fontenoy over again "brought down the house," but changed drama to comedy for the moment.

It was also at the rendering of a play by Mr. Hayes that the actor who played the hero turned what ought to have been the most tender scene into pure comedy, or rather while he was sadly serious the audience caught the comedy. The hero in a tragic hour had to fly from Ireland, and the parting with the beloved heroine took place on the grey rocks by the tossing sea. It was a hurried scene, for his track was shadowed by danger. When he had told her the worst and vowed eternal fealty, and the moment came for flight, he did not take her to his breast, or kiss her, or even clasp her hand. He simply raised his hat and bowed with a splendid politeness! The hilarity of the audience must have been embarrassing.

Maynooth itself has had its gaieties over plays, written and rendered by students; on the performance of a humorous bi-lingual one in 1910 the bishops and D.D.'s who were present forgot ecclesiastical dignity altogether and laughed like children. Maynooth students have also successfully staged an ambitious Irish historical play by one of themselves, a play which was afterwards welcomed in Cork, rendered on that occasion of course by local performers. In Maynooth, as in great periods of the drama in other lands, the feminine characters, as may be expected, are all personated by students.

After a few years of tentative effort, Irish audi-



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ences, like Irish writers themselves, began to grow more critical both of plays and performers. The plays on the whole improved more quickly than the actors, but then there was no regular Gaelic stage to train them. It was not till 1910 that the Gaelic League established a regular Dramatic Company. Belfast Gaels formed another the same year. Local centres like Tawin and Bealach a' Doirin had their troupes earlier. These were brought to Dublin, where they pleased everybody by their naturalness, and they did enlivening work in country towns and districts. The Tawin troupe was trained by an irrepressible young man, Dr. Seumas O'Beirne, himself a native of this remote Galway village. He also wrote for them a humorous play, *An Dochtuir*, which they rendered at home and far from home with a lively sense of comedy. The Doctor, the play, and the players, and various struggles with local principalities and powers, made the name of the little Galway village famous in Ireland and America. These local players have been a happy sign of the histrionic talent we may expect even in rural Ireland as our world brightens.

The main opportunities for Gaelic acting have been at the Oireachtas, the Feiseanna, and special gatherings of Gaelic League branches, but these opportunities being only periodical could do no more than prepare the way for a regular stage. At St. Enda's College, Dublin, we have seen highly promising acting by the students, in plays in Irish and in English, but in Mr. Thomas MacDonagh, the poet, and one of the professors, they have an admirable instructor. They have also had plays with dramatic life and opportu-

nity. By the way, nearly all the Irish writers mentioned in one connection or another in this book, as well as a few others, have written plays, long or short, practically all of which have been acted, and also published in book-form. They may be roughly divided into pastoral or rural, romantic, and historical, the latter being the most ambitious, but not always the most effective.

Plays by Mr. Yeats, Padraic Colum, Synge, and Lady Gregory have been translated into Irish ; plays of Molière and a few shorter French plays have also been translated into Irish by Miss Sheehy, Liam O'Domhnaill, and Eamon O'Neill. A few have fared well on the stage, but on the whole the original Irish plays fare best. Of course, Irish drama is still rather tentative and experimental—that is part of the charm—but writers and critics are gradually coming to it with more artistic seriousness than was the case in the early years. The grave historian and critic of the future can have little understanding of the value, in their own day, of most of the earlier, even the haphazard, plays, the profit and amusement we have derived from a number of them. They are bits of life and memory.

Of all Irish theatrical bodies that I have seen none is more modest or more delightful in its own way than the Ulster Literary Theatre, Belfast. The real names of its playwrights and players are never given to the public ; they write and act for art's sake, and their art is fresh and attractive. Their revelation of rural Ulster life, as in " Rutherford Mayne's " play, *The Drone*, and others, makes it a part of one's own life ever after. They have a sly sense of humour

too. In one of their Dublin terms, for which they engaged the Abbey Theatre, they produced a new play called *The Mist that does be on the Bog*. It parodied noted Abbey writers in buoyant style, while the actors mimicked leading Abbey performers in similar degree. Dubliners paid due tribute to the joyous audacity.

The Theatre of Ireland, the National Players, and the Leinster Stage Society have given various periodical performances, the former staging appreciable work by Seumas O'Kelly, the editor of the *Leinster Leader*. It displayed a considerable knowledge of Irish rural feeling and character, the comedy especially, and in structure it was generally straightforward and workmanlike. This society also revived plays by Mr. Edward Martyn and "A. E."

In those years the Abbey Theatre, Dublin's one regular dramatic institution of decided Irish interest, was sometimes unpopular, sometimes patronised in a modest way, sometimes fairly popular. It generally received much less, once in a while rather more, than its due. After the trouble over the *Play-Boy* at the beginning of 1907 it had a bleak term, and for a couple of years produced little that was new, contenting itself mainly with earlier plays of Mr. Yeats, Lady Gregory, and the late Mr. J. M. Synge, till their most devoted admirers must have grown somewhat restive. Then came a more productive and also more progressive period, with the re-entry of Mr. William Boyle's rather mordantly humorous plays, and new work by Padraic Colum and other writers known and unknown. While we devoted a great deal of attention to the Abbey and its work



in the *Irish Nation*, I was not one of those to whom it represented the beginning and the end of art and literature in Ireland; it was one of several new interests, and it seemed to me at times to be more restricted and less promising than some others; it certainly had not their colour and character. There was a sense of posing or strain about a few of its writers on occasion, what they took for reality was only a fraction of reality, and they harped on peasant Ireland, seen at a peculiar angle, almost to tedium. Of course, building on or with the natural peasantry, so far as they are natural, is a very appealing thing, but Abbey writers, like certain Gaelic Leaguers, and more, seemed often to forget that other people besides the particular peasantry they saw had memories, traditions, and souls, and hence ideals and ordeals.

The Abbey was not liked by snobbish and superficial people, who despised the life it interpreted, often (but by no means always) with simple sincerity and beauty; but it was also something of a trial to sympathisers and supporters who thought that its range was too narrow and apt to become monotonous. Dr. Sigerson, most heroic and picturesque of modern Irish philosophers and individualities, has said pertinently that the heroic fibre, which the nation has always possessed, is curiously lacking in Abbey drama; that sometimes, in pieces of high promise, the grotesque, which might serve in the background, usurps the foreground, an artistic mistake as great as though an architect had allowed gargoyles to occupy the places of saints and kings. Dr. Sigerson's judgment of the Abbey presentation of the peasant is somewhat severe, but it contains a large share of truth. He says that

a new type has been created, but it is not a synthetic painting, rather an individual exception, presented in different lights and shades and all undesirable; the new Irish stage peasant is sordid or silly or both, mean in his manner, mercenary in his marriage, materialistic in his outlook on life; he is but the squalid skeleton of a man whom none would care to know except, perhaps, an anatomist.

The unequal genius of Synge, sometimes opulent, sometimes lean, bizarre, or morbid, brought a distracting measure of stimulation and dissatisfaction. The war over the *Play-Boy* has doubtless been overdone in Ireland and in Irish-America, just as the battle over *Hernani* in Paris, and that over Ibsen in London and elsewhere were overdone. I have only seen that curiosity of art when played as pure farce. As farce it passed muster gaily enough. Reading it calmly it seemed that it would also serve as romantic comedy, but that it contained great pieces and passages which would fit finely into a far higher kind of play than it is on the whole. Those non-Irish critics who see in it a "beautiful love-story" and an "idyll" I cannot understand; the love element, such as it is, seems to be utterly lacking in sincerity. Advanced as interpretation of Irish life and feeling, the main matter is simply preposterous. The *Play-Boy* might have been written by a rather mordant genius who, after he had suffered much physical and mental pain, took drink enough to bring him at once a relief from his suffering and a certain psychic intoxication. *Deirdre* and the mournful and sombre *Riders to the Sea* apart, Synge fared best with beggars and tinkers. In his plays they are often like folk who have fallen

from a great saga-life, but retain much of the imagery and poetry they had before the fall. Appealingly fresh as is Synge's phraseology so often, it has a ripe old flavour to Irish readers or listeners; it is sometimes like literally translated Irish. His work, I think, will live longer as literature than as acting drama.

The Abbey Theatre is most interesting when one can drop into it and put away all dramatic issues of the past, present, and future; just taking its scenes and natural actors as a part of life, no very difficult feat of imagination at times; forgetting for the hour all the fine, challenging things Mr. Yeats has said about peasants, personality, art, the tyranny of mere "opinions," and other matters, and feeling at home with life. That cannot always be; but to say that it often can be is surely to pay a high tribute to the Abbey.



## CHAPTER XXV

### JOAN OF ARC AND IRELAND

IN days of ardour and incidental battling with bishops, Joan of Arc proved an inspiration, a challenge, a distraction, a source of alarm. From time to time earnest Protestant friends took exactly the attitude that many Protestants outside Ireland would expect them not to take. From the apparently inevitable attitude they shrank. The ceremony of the beatification of La Pucelle at Rome impelled our pro-Catholic daily papers to elaborate leading articles in which the salient interests of the story were entirely ignored. As the *Irish Nation* said at the time, our daily pressmen had not yet the courage, even when they had the knowledge, to set forth the truth and point the moral of a development of this character, with its dramatic justice and irony. Our Churchmen themselves, we added, would be chary and timid about treating the question deeply; they would betray no desire to emulate the serene courage and boldness of Rome. Yet, we insisted, the frank facing of the story of Joan of Arc and the candid acceptance of its lessons would do all Ireland good, though in the first instance it might stagger some and chasten more.

While the Maid of Orleans, so shamefully and barbarously treated in her day, had profoundly attracted and exercised the world's mind ever since, and had been the theme of many "explanations" which left

her real force and fascination unexplained, there were certain lessons in her drama which he who ran might read. One of the first strange facts, which well might set Ireland thinking, and trying to re-adjust its notions, was that she was one of the greatest of "anti-clerics." Episcopal enmity and persistence (though the fact might not be known in Ireland) were largely responsible for her sale by the Burgundians to the English, who delivered her over to the Inquisition for trial, and the rack of an ordeal which most Christian-minded moderns would like to be able to blot out from the memory of history. Her condemnation as a heretic and a sorceress, her burning in the streets of Rouen, all the terrible features of her story, might well cause Churchmen to feel chastened and sorrowful after five long centuries.

The Roman ceremony of our own day was incidentally a crushing condemnation of Joan's ecclesiastical critics and accusers, a striking reminder of the fallibility of Churchmen when they departed from the spirit and teaching of their Master and substituted a theology of repression and terror for the *vita nova* of the Sermon on the Mount. That the martyred "heretic" and "sorceress" of the fifteenth century was found worthy of beatification in the twentieth, when passion and rash judgment were long passed away, conveyed a lesson to be remembered when Churchmen left their sacred sphere to thunder or plot against nation-builders—Joan of Arc was one of the greatest and subtlest nation-builders in history. Rome in upholding the reality of her inspiration acknowledged the divinity of the national spirit which she typified in so wondrous a way. Rome beatified

the greatest heroine of national freedom in the known story of the race. This raised considerations on which certain of our prelates might ponder with advantage to themselves and the nation.

Conservative clerics thought these sentiments strained or insidious or an excuse for being "anti-episcopal," but they shrank from any serious discussion of the question. Friendly Protestants in the Gaelic League thought them challenging and unwise. Sundry quiet-minded Catholics betrayed a nervous dread of considering the matter one way or the other. In this, as in many another instance, they shrank from the facts as some sensitive natures shrink from sights of torture. Their point seemed to be that whosoever was wrong or right Ireland had nothing to do with the old storms and barbarities of Europe. This attitude, by the way, deserves thinking over, as it goes some distance to explain a misunderstanding between a considerable section of Irish Catholics and a certain proportion of Irish Protestants. Many Irish Catholics know, and desire to know, very little of European history, but have a certain general knowledge of Irish history; numerous Irish Protestants know a good deal of European history, but comparatively little of Irish history. European history has much to show of persecution and tyranny by Catholics (and of course Protestants, too); Irish history hardly anything. Those Catholics cannot understand the fear or presumption of Catholic persecution, those Protestants (not so many, however, as is often assumed) think it in the nature of things. So they look on the question of what is possible or probable in Ireland from very different standpoints. If the



Catholics knew more of the history of Europe and the Protestants more of the history of Ireland there would be less confusion of thought.

There were later occasions for pointing the moral of the story of Joan of Arc. A bishop or another made mention of the tragic drama. Thus Dr. O'Donnell, the Bishop of Raphoe, preaching a panegyric on Columcille in Derry in May 1909, said: "In every age the wisdom, if not the motives, of those who sustain an heroic part in great contests, is called in question by those whose view or interest is different. This is particularly true of the saints. The clouds are sure to gather from some quarter. Even the great and gentle Anselm, whose eighth centenary the Church has just been celebrating, did not escape. . . . The cloud, however, that from some points of view shaded Columba, was only a thin mist compared with the awful thunderstorm that nine centuries later burst in the city of Rouen on this very day of the year, the 30th of May, around an heroic Maid. . . . But the Church of God discerns, and forgets not her saints. Joan of Arc is beatified by Pius X. and Columba is not forgotten in Leo XIII.'s famous letter to the Scottish nation." The *Irish Nation* remarked that had his lordship gone a little into detail the very true point he made could have been shown in striking light; for the "thunderstorm" that burst round Joan of Arc was an ecclesiastical one; she was condemned as a "heretic" by ecclesiastics, and her sentence was read by a bishop. If a bishop could make so terrible a mistake on a religious question in connection with a saintly character like Joan, was it not likely that bishops might also

be mistaken in regard to national questions in our own day? The query was pertinent, as for some time ecclesiastics from the Cardinal down had been talking wofully or wildly of the "anti-clerics" and all such dreadful folk who had been standing for popular rights in education and other things.

That very week the *Irish Nation* and myself had received a choice shower of compliments at the hands of a Doctor of Divinity, a Connacht bishop's right-hand man, and an editor in a modest way, for he had charge of a *Cathedral Calendar*—through which the compliments came. Here are a few: "disreputable publication," "unwarranted and treacherous action," "a Julian and a Judas rolled into one," "imagines it is a paying game," "he, too, might grow fat on reviling and blackening the character of his distinguished countrymen," "graduated in Cockneydom," "disgusting and reprehensible," "hastens to fight the bishops on the question of compulsory versus voluntary Irish in the new University," "a publication whose aims are Satanic." In a country where high ecclesiastics were so easily excited it was perhaps pardonable to assume that the diffusion of the knowledge of the true facts of La Pucelle's tragedy would do good. But ironies continued to accompany the references. On the last occasion of all, when a cleric had questioned some of the facts—which seemed startlingly new to Irish country people—we quoted telling points in reply from the work of a certain noted historian. And then a relative of the historian's, a gifted Irish Protestant lady, wrote somewhat sadly to say that what she called this effort to prove "the Catholic Church"

had been in the wrong was not diplomatic and would lead to trouble! So the criticism of Cauchon and his brethren, whom Rome itself had just condemned by implication, was an attack on Catholicity, and led to Protestant distress. Plainly it was not easy to be at once "enlightening" and "diplomatic."



## CHAPTER XXVI

### POLITICAL TRANSITION

THE papers I successively conducted in Ireland did not reflect the official views of any political party, while they had contributors and readers from practically all the political parties and groups. We were engaged in what we called "Nation-building," in a rather deep and capacious sense, and we considered political issues and personalities, like others, in the light of their bearing upon the "Nation," which I and others regarded as something ever growing, evolving, realising itself; the resultant of numerous factors and forces, obvious and not obvious, objective and subjective, palpable and impalpable. A Co-operative Commonwealth would perhaps best express the ultimate ideal. Whatever changes, immediate or gradual, modest or large, tentative or sweeping, might take place in the methods or machinery of Irish government would still leave us the educational, social, intellectual, theological, co-operative, and other issues and problems I have been considering.

Legislative machinery, wisely used, might make a big difference, inasmuch as it would enable us to deal practically with several things in regard to which we had so far merely hopeful beliefs or pious opinions; and it might also lead to a considerable re-casting of parties and groups and a more general concentration on domestic and internal issues—education, for ex-

ample—which many for the present would not tackle, and some, for selfish reasons, did not want to see tackled. But administrative or legislative changes, after all, would only provide us with machinery, or levers; in the last analysis fortune and progress depended on native ideal and character; and not those of one class or creed, but of all classes and creeds, taking a healthy and cordial interest in Ireland and in themselves and in one another; sincerely concerned in the development of a fraternal and fruitful civilisation. And as Ireland was a very diverse, complex, much-tried, and somewhat bewildered entity, we could not expect any great and decisive progress towards this brighter ideal for a generation.

On the surface there were obvious conflicting interests or differences, as in other nations, but we might well hope to find the underlying unity. Under our own eyes in a few short years we had seen hopeful and heartsome happenings, and they were an earnest of better things to be. While politics, in the restricted sense in which it is usually regarded, and in other senses, was much with us, the far greater importance in latter-day Ireland has not been so much a political movement as what might be called the resurrection and the fostering of a Civilisation. In other words, our concern has been more with humanity than with politics, with intensive culture than with theory. We would rather see Ireland a creative, humanised Home Power than one of the "Great Powers."

To those who think thus, and there are many of all parties, classes, and creeds who are coming so to

think more or less, ordinary politics must often seem somewhat unreal. Hence it is that so many of the younger men, though deeper in national feeling than their fathers, do not take so pronounced a part in avowedly political organisations. Even the more advanced body, Sinn Fein,<sup>1</sup> has not retained the allegiance or kept up the enthusiasm of a number of them, devoted at first, partly because its social and co-operative sense grew tepid.

The ablest exponent of the Sinn Fein policy is Mr. Arthur Griffith, who set before Ireland a rather spacious and heroic programme at the outset. It meant the withdrawal of the Irish Members from Westminster, the application of the home-working policy of the Gaelic League and the industrial movement to further questions of education and industry, to transit, economics, poor law, afforestation, arbitration, banking, and several others, leading up to the scheme of the General Council of County Councils as the nucleus of a national authority which would practically have the force of an Irish Parliament. It meant a huge self-helping, home-doing, and incidentally passive resistance movement. The main effect was educational and critical. On the whole the official Sinn Fein leaders have been rather lacking in magnetic individuality and driving power.

Young Ulster Protestants—like Mr. Bulmer Hobson, who started *The Republic* in Belfast—were amongst those attracted at first, but they did not find official Sinn Fein quite bold enough or congenial enough. It also secured in its early days the

<sup>1</sup> Sinn Fein (Shinn Fain), literally Ourselves. "Sinn Fein amháin," Ourselves alone.



adhesion of a few able young priests, but their power was limited. In practice, Mr. John Sweetman, its president, has proved to be one of its restraining and restricting influences. He is a Meath grazier, an alarmist in regard to the labour element that is trying to come towards its own, and an ultramontane. Hence, however sincerely patriotic he may be in theory, he does not dream of applying the Sinn Fein principle more than partially; he is pained or perturbed at the thought of tackling and solving some of those very problems that Ireland most needs to solve. Apart from these difficulties of Sinn Fein, Nationalist Ireland generally was not convinced that the Parliamentary leaders could carry it no further.

Yet as to the more popular Parliamentary force, to some extent it has been living on the past, and its case is rather complicated and curious. It is more real than its speakers and speeches would indicate. It has been strongly criticised in Ireland, but of course for reasons entirely different from those that actuate its opponents in England. Unless we remember this we confuse the question. To English critics it does not fit in with an Imperial conception; to Irish critics, for one reason or another, it does not harmonise with a national, intellectual, and social conception. Its leaders resent Irish criticism much more than English. They include men of long service who have suffered for the faith that was in them, but they have come to think that they are the nation, in much the same way as ecclesiastics think they themselves are the Church. Their oratory is often as unreal as sermons. Many a time in following the home campaigns and pronouncements of Mr. Redmond and

his friends, or indeed of Mr. William O'Brien and his friends—and in a minor degree of Hibernians and Orangemen—I have been reminded of the curious romances that appealed more or less to people high and low from the early Middle Ages to the years when modern Europe may be said to have begun. Of such work are the tales laughed out of actuality but given a playful literary immortality in *Don Quixote*, the characters and concerns poetised in *Orlando Innamorato*, and scores of others.

Students of social and economic interests turning from those tales to the actual lives of the people are apt to condemn them as peculiarly unreal and unnatural. The fact remains that Europe liked them for ages, extravagant or grotesque though they seem, and never thought of asking for more realistic fiction. Europe did not want its tale-weavers and romancists to deal with the life it knew, but to turn its mind to realms where the fantastic was normal and the impossible ran riot. Eventually the wildest dragons became ordinary, and knights-errant had to be fearfully and wonderfully spiced before the popular palate would accept them. In the end the minds of the tale-tellers, and many of those who heard them, became so inured to extravagance that though they ate and drank and did the ordinary business of life much like their fellow-men, they were mild lunatics intellectually. They lived in an unreal world and were impervious to reason and experience. In the shocks of the economic, intellectual, spiritual, and national revolutions that made modern Europe they were sobered or annihilated.

One of the functions performed by popular members

of the Irish Party—and various other politicians—in Ireland is curiously similar to theirs. They have other aspects, to be sure, but very often they are just tellers of stories which hosts of their hearers accept in the spirit in which mediæval Europe took its tales of knight and dragon. Part of their power lies in their appeal to the story-sense in the masses, who have few recreations or noble distractions in the toil of life. Their speeches about the Promised Land, the no-far-distant glory in College Green, the struggle for Unity—they are as keen on a mechanical and surface unity as Churchmen—against the Dragons of Dissension, the epic Fights on the Floor of the House, the Wonders that are always going to happen—these things are the romantic tales, the spirited melodrama, the coveted intellectual dissipation of thousands who can secure no better. They have little or no relation to the realities and problems of the actual Ireland that we know. Of course, the M.P.'s will reply that their great concern is with a root-matter, as they and their regular audiences believe, and that things must be put in a bold and highly-coloured way for the multitude. Be that as it may, while in themselves they are often shrewd and capable in normal life, on the platform they are gorgeous story-tellers and eloquent romancists.

On this rôle and relation of theirs the rising generation for a decade or more has been caustic and ironical. Many of their own home-staying, more realistic followers want them to feel and speak like nation-builders, not knights-errant and slayers of dragons. In that respect, whatever their other merits, they remain for the most part incurable.



But though Parliamentarianism has thus acquired a certain humorous significance with really earnest people, and though it has been criticised in turn for unreality, opportunism, half-nationalism, it is still fairly strong in the country. To some extent its leaders are independent of Irish opinion and criticism, being rather generously supported financially and morally by Irish-America and Irish-Australia. This point might very easily be pushed too far. If Irishmen abroad preserve a certain sympathy for the homeland, it is entirely to their credit. Various Irish causes and projects owe much to their support, while at the same time the ideal of most of us is an Ireland doing her own varied work and supporting it herself; but matters are not normal yet, very far from it.

Meanwhile there is something in the point that the Irish Party thinks to a certain extent for Irish-America, as higher ecclesiastics think to no small extent for Rome, and others in Ireland think more or less for England. It is a complicated situation. Anyhow, the "Party" is in possession, with a certain tradition behind it, a certain momentum in it, and it has the power of the purse in addition to its prestige. It is fairly representative of its Irish constituencies, but in later and present circumstances need not be over-sensitive or responsive to their criticism. The points of view from which it is regarded in Ireland vary greatly. Some resent or lament its isolation—in the main—from the newer movements; to others it is largely an English political party in practice; to many, on the other hand, it fairly typifies what they regard as national, though some of them consider it might be more effective and more Irish.

Thousands who find in its platform romance and imagery a certain intoxication or dissipation are also shrewd enough to realise the serious underlying programme for which it stands more or less. They have not forgotten the agrarian and other revolutions that have been wrought since the eighties—though the Party is often reminded that these were really won by agitation in Ireland—they know the industrial, transit, educational, and other reforms that are still essential, and, despite all the criticism, they are not greatly shaken in the faith that the Party's professed way of getting the means of dealing with these is the better one.

The relations of the Parliamentarians and the generality of the Catholic clergy are outwardly placid on the whole, but the association is not founded on any real mutual trust or esteem, and shrewd observers do not believe that it is likely to be lasting. The clergy fear that soon or late their monopoly of educational management and other things will be faced and broken. The bishops—and the Vatican—desire the M.P.'s, or most of them, to remain as a Catholic party, in effect, at Westminster. Concentration and questioning in Ireland are not at all to the taste of the majority of the prelates.

Altogether we have seen in politics some such currents and changes as we have seen in the Catholic world. Established leaders and explanations have been questioned. Tested in the light of a new and larger ideal, they were found wanting. Dissatisfied younger people found a field for their energies in work not avowedly political, but in the broad sense national. As time went on, while there was a certain divorce

between this growing element and folk high and low in the Parliamentary movement, a great many in the latter became more or less affected by the practical idealism and the clearer national consciousness created by the newer thinkers and workers, and the trend in that direction is increasing. The attitude of the country people in the University struggle was as great a revelation to political leaders in general as to Churchmen. It strengthened the hands of the minority of those political leaders, including members of the Irish Party, who had rendered definite service to the Gaelic League and the industrial mission—men who had seen Ireland more clearly than their colleagues.

So the political sphere shows transition and readjustment, though not as yet in the same degree as others, for the waiting on the Westminster "result" has tended, in some quarters, during the past few years, to a certain suspension and resignation, or what restive or impatient spirits call stagnation. With labour's bestirring of itself, with the serious social, industrial, and educational problems that Ireland has to settle north and south—all looked at by a large proportion of people in their bearing on a more generous and human national ideal—there must necessarily be considerable changes in the general situation in the near future. Legislation at the best can only be one important factor. The most hopeful feature—though there are serious anti-social and selfish forces in the country—is the deepening desire for concentration and co-operation within Ireland, for the development of a natural civilisation, and making Ireland worthy of herself.



## CHAPTER XXVII

### EN ROUTE

THE ideals and the actualities, the comradeship and the clash, the struggles and the successes I have described, made Ireland seem unceasingly interesting in those years. The dominant feeling which remains with me is that the life was spacious and joyous. And such in sooth it was, for all the tension and trouble. Where people are re-discovering themselves, are mentally alive, there is always magic, whatever the opposing powers may be. To work and look inward is better than to look towards the stars ; and that is what a number of our people have been doing this century. That way lie riches and a renewal of wonder, a joy which can neither be expressed nor argued about, and a strength, individual and collective, which is likely to prove unaccountable and embarrassing to opponents who are always looking outward and afar. Others who have not been looking deeply inward have been looking critically and interestedly round about them with the view to the brightening and uplifting of little or much in native circumstances, and in the way that seems natural and effective to themselves, not necessarily in the way that seems appropriate to theorists, tourists, and strangers.

Through these and other reasons we come once more to have social and intellectual history and

spiritual stress and drama in Ireland. The shock of the experience is distinctly good for us. We do not expect great results in a day or a generation. Theology will not be spiritualised to-morrow, nor Christianity in its various forms be seen in being as a vital social force the day after. A new Irish art and literature need not be expected to come into flower in a decade, nor the decayed town to have become the City Beautiful, nor the farmer and the labourer to have got more than a preliminary stage in the establishment of the Co-operative Commonwealth. In short, neither now nor hereafter can magic and miracle take the place of normal processes in Irish or any other affairs. But "normal" is an elastic term ; by creating a finer consciousness, individual and collective, in other words by evolution of mentality, by remembering and acting upon the faith that interior development is the beginning of progress, we can make normal what in stagnant and pessimistic circumstances would seem abnormal or magical.

Some such effect has been achieved in Ireland this century in a modest degree. It quickens our interest, stimulates the quest for the more and more. And when Eire in some far-off age has evolved into the state which co-operators picture as perfect co-operation, Gaels as Gaelicism in flower, Christian idealists as practical Christianity, it will all be seen to have just brought men to the threshold, so to say, of the House of Life, the gate of the Field of Life. They will simply have set self and social state in order, tamed the physical and psychic Adam, and cleared the course for the fairer and finer evolution of their

mental and spiritual selves, their real and permanent individualities.

Happily there is no probability that the state of man, as we know him, Eireannach or another, will ever be static. There will always be more and more mental farming to do, higher and higher states of consciousness to attain. To the purposive activity and movement we can imagine no finale. We are all *en route*, eternally creators and re-creators. We may quicken the pace and spiritualise the process in any age. That is the essence and innermost meaning of the best of the work in the Ireland of the new century.













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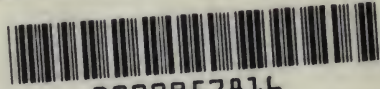
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